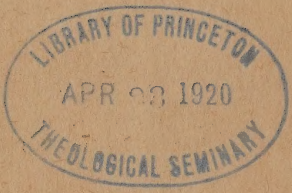

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GALILEAN DAYS

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GALILEAN DAYS

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PREFACE

To those who know *The Glory of Bethlehem*, or *The Wondrous Passion*, or *The Call of the Lord*, the method of this book will be familiar. As they offer meditations upon the Infancy, the Passion and the Resurrection of our Lord, so this book suggests meditations upon the Galilean Ministry. It is not an analysis, nor a complete record of the work and teaching of Christ in Galilee, nor does it deal in any way with the problem of the sources of the narrative. It is a devotional study of some of the chief events of our Lord's ministry in Galilee, written by one who believes that no humanitarian view of Jesus can meet the demands of the Gospel story, any more than it can satisfy the deepest instincts of the human heart. Only to those who believe that Jesus is God, and that His Kingdom is being realised upon earth in the life of His Church, do the Gospels yield their richest treasure. To them the Gospel story is not the mere record of a distant past, but the living interpreter of the present. In the light of that Incarnate Life do we see light. The simple facts of the life of Jesus are of infinite application to the needs of the world to-day.

"Whosoever goeth onward, and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God." In response to

the call of the age we cannot but "go onward." If we are to carry with us the true vision of God, we must perpetually renew our knowledge of Him by the prayerful study of the life of Jesus. With Thomas à Kempis we must make the resolve, "Be it therefore our chief pursuit to meditate upon the life of Jesus Christ." It is to aid in some small way the better understanding of that life, and to interpret some of its teaching in the light of the deeper needs of this progressive age, that this little book of meditation and prayer is written. Study and prayer must go hand in hand. In such critical days as these, if we are to build truly and well, Jesus must not only be our Rule of life, but the Ruler of all our thought and action. For if there is no progress but in the following of Christ, there is no happiness but in His worship.

F. W. D.

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GALILEAN DAYS

I

GALILEE

ISAIAH ix. 1–7.

A

"THERE shall be no gloom to her that was in anguish. In the former time He brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time hath He made it glorious, by the way of the sea beyond Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." Thus out of the gloom and anguish of the Assyrian invasion of Northern Israel, the ancient prophet saw the glorious light that should one day break upon the darkness of Galilee. Eight hundred years had passed, before the writer of the first Gospel attributed the fulfilment of this prophecy to the life of Jesus at Capernaum. The Galilean days of glory were the days which Jesus Christ, the Virgin-born, the Son of God, spent in Galilee in the fulfilment of His work of redemption. Nazareth, the quiet village hidden away in the heart of the hills of Galilee, sheltered Him in the days of His obscurity. Capernaum, the busy town of the lakeside,

became the scene of His greatest activities when He manifested Himself openly to the world.

The region of Galilee covered roughly the area of the four Northern tribes, Issachar, Zebulun, Asher and Naphtali. The district had earned the title "Galilee of the nations," because it had long contained an unusual proportion of pagan elements in its population. From the first days of the Jewish settlement in the time of Joshua, and in the period of the Judges, Galilee had never been completely conquered. Not only had the seaboard never been reached, but in the fastnesses of the hills the Canaanites had been allowed to remain. It was their continued presence that made religious apostasy so frequent in the history of the Northern Kingdom. The district of Galilee fell an easy prey to the repeated attacks of the Assyrian invaders, until at last the capture of Samaria in 722 B.C. brought the Kingdom of Israel to an end. A large part of its population was deported to Assyrian dependencies, and in its place the conqueror settled a foreign people, who gradually mingled with the humbler element of the Israelite population which had been left on the soil. It was now indeed Galilee of the nations. Gentile influence prevailed where once the Prophets of God had rallied Israel to the worship of Jehovah. A hundred and eighty years later, when Cyrus, the conqueror of Babylon, adopting a policy fundamentally different from that of both Assyrian and Babylonian rulers, released the captive populations from bondage, and restored them to their homes, it was Judæa and not Galilee, to which the returning exiles flocked.

A new era for Galilee opened with the revolt of the Maccabees. The relentless persecution of the Jewish

faith by the Syrian autocrat, Antiochus Epiphanes, culminated in the profanation of the Temple at Jerusalem in the year 168 B.C., which fanned the smouldering embers of Jewish patriotism into a living flame. The Galilean Jews, threatened with extinction at the hands of the surrounding heathen, by whom they were so vastly outnumbered, were rescued by Simon Maccabeus and brought to Jerusalem. For thirty years the rich lands of Galilee remained in the possession of the Gentiles. It was not till the forward military policy of John Hyrcanus ensured protection to the northern regions of the Holy Land, that the Jews returned from the South, and a strong and loyal Jewish settlement was formed in Lower Galilee. Thus Galilee was redeemed from the possession of the Gentiles, and the reproach of Galilee of the nations was removed.

But while the Jewish character of the Galilean people was thus assured, the cosmopolitan influences of an alien population left their mark upon the Jews of Galilee. Nowhere else in Palestine were the Jews in such close touch with the life of the great world, of which Rome had become the mistress. Nowhere else in Palestine was there such a crowded and busy life. Not only did the exuberant fertility of the soil engage a large population in agriculture, but round the Lake were gathered cities teeming with a large industrial population, and linked by the great trade routes with the centres of commerce in Egypt, Syria and the West. The fisheries of the Lake employed thousands. The fish-curing trade of the Galilean cities was extensive and very profitable, and the industry had a great reputation in the markets of the Roman world. The

corrupting influences of Greek civilisation radiated from the court of the Herods at Tiberias. The mastery of Rome was represented by the garrison at Cæsarea, and by many a camp scattered among the cities of Galilee. The markets and towns of Galilee were the meeting-place of Egyptians, Syrians, Phœnicians, Arabs, Greeks, Romans, Jews and Arameans. The little province presented a picture in miniature of the busiest commercial and social life of the greatest cities of the Roman Empire. In the midst of this crowded, teeming, many-sided life the Galilean Days of Christ's ministry on earth were spent.

It is easy to derive the special characteristics of the people of Galilee from the influences of their history and environment. Out of the inglorious records of the apostasy of the Northern Kingdom in the story of the Jewish nation, they could take pride in the greatness of such messengers of God as Elijah and Elisha, and in the memorable prophetic ministries of Amos and Hosea. But it was from the glories of the Maccabean struggle for religious liberty and national freedom, that the Galilean people drew their highest inspiration. From the days when the fervid zeal of Judas and Simon Maccabeus had extended to the North the spirit of revolt against the insidious corruption and the insolent claims of Hellenism, a new enthusiasm had been born in the hearts of the people of Galilee. Trained in habits of enterprise and independence by their daily life of fishing, agriculture and commerce, quickened in religious purpose by their devotion to the Maccabean ideal of the Law, they lived in passionate expectation of the dawn of a Messianic kingdom. The apocalyptic literature and teaching of those days of

struggle and hope, with its extravagant promises of national freedom, earthly sovereignty and spiritual glory, found no more fertile soil than the hearts of the men of Galilee. They were alert to every hint of revolt and quick to shed their blood in any rising, however hopeless, which rallied them to the standard of liberty.

It was to such a people that Jesus Christ first preached the Gospel of the Kingdom. It was from such men that Jesus chose His first disciples. It was natural that Galilee should be chosen as the first centre of His work. Jerusalem was indeed the religious and political capital of Judaism. But its religion and politics alike were wanting in freedom, vitality and hope. By its natural position Jerusalem lay apart from all the great movements of the world. It was isolated by desert and rock. No routes of trade and commerce passed through it. Jerusalem could be the goal of religious pilgrimage for a people, who cherished beyond all things the sacred traditions of the past. But it could not readily lie open to the new influences of life and thought, which were stirring in the wider world throughout. Jesus made proof of the spirit of Jerusalem in the first months of His self-revelation, and found there no response. It could be no training ground for disciples. It offered no opportunities for quiet seclusion nor retreat. The bitter hostility of the Pharisees, the suspicion of the political rulers, the hatred of the Sadducees, would have cut short the ministry of Jesus at Jerusalem, before He could have gathered round Him a steadfast body of disciples trained to carry on the work of the Kingdom which He had come to found.

The spirit of the North was very different from that of Jerusalem. Even in its acceptance of the discipline of the Law, Galilee adopted a wider and freer interpretation of its traditions than the rigorists of Jerusalem could tolerate. In every way the air of the Capital was repressive and stifling, compared with the freedom and vigour of Galilee. The aloofness and narrower prejudices of Judæa broke down before the wider outlook and more imperial interests of the North. There was a blitheness and gaiety of spirit, a tradition of chivalry and a love of adventure in the life of Galilee, very different from the pretentious formalism, the calculated avarice and the selfish bigotry of the Jews of Jerusalem.

It was in Galilee, therefore, that Jesus sought the clear-eyed, practical, unprejudiced men of enthusiasm, who would be receptive of that new revelation of God, which He came to bring; and who, under His guidance, would be responsive to those higher ideals of human life, which the Kingdom of God both enjoined and embodied. It was in the divine fullness of time that Galilee was found ready for the Incarnate Son of God. The life of such a village as Nazareth provided seclusion enough for the quiet development of the child Jesus under the fostering care of Joseph the carpenter—a seclusion from which at will the throbbing life of the wider world around could easily be observed; while in the busy crowds of the lakeside cities, with their wealth of human interest and their alert vitality, Jesus found the audience which He sought for the first delivery of His message and for His ministry of healing and love. Here, indeed, were the representatives of all those "weary and heavy-

laden" sons of men, to whom His divine appeal is eternally addressed. If the background of the Galilean ministry of Christ is filled with the crowded figures of a great industrial population, it is dark also with the pitiful shame and agony of human sin and suffering, which He came to bear and to redeem.

These were the days which have made Galilee a name of treasured memory to all mankind. The words imputed to the dying apostate, Julian, voice the victory of Galilee through all the ages, "O Galilean, Thou hast conquered." The secret of those conquests, repeated through successive generations of men, is revealed in the infinite forbearance, the divine love, and eternal wisdom, which marked the Galilean Days of the ministry of Jesus.

A Prayer for the Love of Jesus.

Blessed Lord, Whose delights are with the sons of men, teach us in all things to seek Thee and always to love Thee, that as Thou hast become man for our salvation, and hast died at our hands upon the Cross, so we may take up our cross daily and follow Thee, and may live always to Thy glory and be found worthy of Thy calling, Who livest with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God, for ever and ever.

B

"And Jesus went about all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing all manner of disease and all manner of sickness." These words of the first Gospel are a concise summary of the work of the Galilean Days. This is what Jesus planned for His ministry in Galilee—a mission tour of teaching, preaching and healing. The actual record, which the Gospels

give, is but a meagre fraction of what we should like to know. The simplicity and bareness of the narrative of the Gospels constitute one of the greatest proofs of their truthfulness. Details of the personal life of Jesus, of the daily fellowship and intercourse of the disciples, of the social and political conditions of the time—these are all withheld. There is no attempt to give a background to the story. The simple and few incidents which out of their ample store of material the Evangelists have selected for their picture stand by themselves in a clear foreground. There is no desire by any word of comment, interpretation, or counsel, to point a lesson, heighten a contrast or enforce a moral. There is no emotional appeal; there are no notes of exclamation, nothing is underlined.

The Gospels are not so much a history as a sketch of a historical Character. It is the character of One Who is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever, with which the writers are concerned. Each Evangelist chooses his own standpoint, and with true artistic skill presents his own picture of the mind and character of Christ. It is the eternal Person of Christ that matters. It is not so much what He taught, nor what He did in itself, but what He is for ever, as He challenges each soul to a decision with regard to Himself. His teaching and His acts must be recorded, because they are essential for our apprehension of His Person, and they make known to us the meaning and the manner of our salvation. But the Gospel is the "Gospel of the Kingdom," the "Gospel of Jesus Christ." The purpose of the fourth Gospel is stated in very distinct terms, but its motive is not essentially different from that of the other Gospels. "Many other signs truly

did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name." This means that the Gospels are not concerned to present a full, chronological narrative of the life of Jesus. The fullest detail is reserved in all the Gospels for the story of the Passion and the Death of Christ. Of the teaching and the miracles of Jesus a choice is made, sufficient to illustrate truly the nature of His work and the Deity of His Person. When we come, therefore, to a study of the ministry in Galilee, we are not unprepared for a very incomplete and partial story. The sequence of events is not easy to determine, the gradual development of teaching is not clearly indicated, details often seem to conflict and there is no certainty of interpretation. But the general purpose of the ministry of the Galilean Days, its main theme of teaching, and the chronological order of its chief events are not difficult to discover.

Although the environment of the Galilean life was so markedly pagan, and the civilisation of the wealthiest cities was so thoroughly Greek, Jesus never conceived that His mission called Him to any but to the Jews. "I am not sent, but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." "Go not into any way of the Gentiles, and enter not into any city of the Samaritans; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." If Christ healed the daughter of the Syro-Phœnician woman, it was under loving protest, compelled by the vigour of her undaunted faith. We have no record that He ever entered the populous Greek cities of Tiberias, Magdala or Taricheae, the most wealthy and

the most famous of the cities by the lakeside. His ministry among the large towns seems to have been confined to Capernaum, Chorazin and Bethsaida, which were pre-eminently Jewish in character and population. In choosing the Jews of Galilee to be the first among whom the Kingdom of God should be preached, Jesus was appealing to the fairest-minded, the freest and the most unprejudiced of the Jews of Palestine. The Gospel was so preached by Christ to the Jews who were most capable of response, that it was overheard by the Gentiles among whom they lived. Thus the seed was sown, which afterwards, under the fostering care of the Apostles and early teachers of the Church, bore such rich and abundant fruit among the nations.

The ministry of the Galilean Days was in every way a work of preparation. The teaching, which Jesus gave, was not the revelation of the deeper truths about God or His Kingdom. There was no emphasis on the meaning of Atonement, nor on the work of the Holy Spirit; there was no unfolding of the truth about His own Person, no effort to enforce the lessons of the Incarnation. Jesus was content with the revelation of the Father as the God of love, and of the Kingdom as the sphere of His sovereignty, while He taught chiefly in parables, and explained the beauty and the need of such individual virtues as humility, faith, charity, mercy, truth and sincerity, for those who were to enjoy the blessings of the Kingdom.

The miracles which so regularly marked the early ministry of Christ in Galilee had a preparatory purpose also. They paved the way for His teaching. While they were in themselves a disclosure of the love

and power of God, they broke down the barriers of physical infirmity and mental obliquity, which kept men from the knowledge of God, and created an attitude of expectation and faith most favourable for the acceptance of His teaching. Undoubtedly they bore witness to the more than human power of Jesus, but Christ Himself never regarded them as the main proofs of His Deity. They were in a sense incidental, the inevitable outcome of Love Incarnate brought into the presence of human suffering and sin. Thus the miracles of healing were meant to win a way for the spiritual appeal of Christ. But their purpose was misunderstood, and their significance disregarded. Often Jesus was compelled to enjoin silence upon those He had healed, lest too much attention should be drawn to the wonderful powers of the Messenger, while the message itself passed unheeded. As the Galilean ministry developed, Jesus was constrained to withdraw Himself from the wonder-loving crowds, who wished to make Him king.

The Galilean Days were preparatory also in their relation to the disciples. Galilee was the specially chosen training-ground of the Twelve. Both the Miracles and the public Teaching of Jesus in Galilee were designed by Him to have their special influence upon the disciples, who were able to turn to their Master in private for the interpretation of what they wished to understand. And in Galilee they were sent upon their trial mission, experiencing the first hardships and the first joys of those who were called to be "fishers of men." It was Galilee which provided almost all the disciples, it was Galilee also which first proved them.

In this preparatory ministry of Jesus there was no part of Jewish Galilee left without witness. In the larger Jewish towns Jesus taught and preached and healed with a thoroughness to which His own words bore testimony. "Then began He to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, because they repented not. Woe unto thee, Chorazin, woe unto thee, Bethsaida, for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which were done in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." Capernaum came to be known as "His own city." He made it the starting point for mission tours to the neighbouring districts. Where He Himself had not yet been, Jesus sent His disciples; and where they went, He Himself followed. He "sent them two and two before His face into every city and place, whither He Himself was about to come."

There was hardly any pathway or road in Galilee, which had not been trodden by the footsteps of the Incarnate Son of God. Galilee was the garden of Palestine. When we ourselves move among scenes of natural beauty, it is a gracious thing to remember that our joy is consecrated by the experience of Jesus. And when in turn we thread our way through the crowded streets of our busy cities, it is an inspiration to know that in Galilee Jesus found the same thronged and teeming life, and loved to minister to its needs.

An Act of Praise.

Holy and Blessed Jesu, Who didst come from the peace of heaven to minister to the needs of frail and sinful men, praised be Thou for the constant love of Thy unwearied service. Wonderful art Thou in Thy zeal for our salvation, gracious art Thou in Thy compassionate kindness and tender care. Incarnate Lord, Master of men and Lover of souls, we glorify Thee for the beauty

of Thy perfect example, and praise Thee for the fullness of Thy redeeming power. Thanks be to Thee for Thy ever-present ministries of healing and benediction. Glory be to Thee for Thy words of wisdom and of truth, and for the blessed hope of eternal fellowship with Thee, Who in the unity of the Father and the Holy Ghost, livest and reignest God for ever and ever.

C

The general outline of the ministry in Galilee can be determined with fair accuracy. It is the outstanding difference between the first three Gospels and the fourth, that the Synoptists devote themselves with special emphasis to the work of Christ in Galilee, while the Gospel according to St. John reveals the special effort of witness and teaching which marked the ministry of Jesus in Jerusalem. The very fact that Jesus had chosen Galileans as His first disciples would point to the probability of a first concentration upon the districts of Galilee. The careful and slow stages by which the disciples were individually chosen are disclosed by the fourth Gospel. After Christ's first public appearance in Galilee at the marriage-feast at Cana, He moved southwards with some of His disciples, to keep the first Passover of His public ministry at Jerusalem. A brief ministry in Judæa followed, in which Jesus sought to extend the work which the Bapist had begun.

The details of this ministry in the South are uncertain, but from the later words of our Lord, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her own brood under her wings, and ye would not," it is probable that Jesus found time to make a very explicit appeal to the Jews of the South. Perhaps the opposition

which His claims aroused was too bitter, and the obstacles to the progress of His mission were too serious in a district where the forces of Pharisaic formalism and religious bigotry were so deeply entrenched. The news of the arrest of John Baptist by Herod Antipas was followed by the withdrawal of Jesus to Galilee. It could not have been as a retreat of greater safety that Jesus sought the North, for the palace and court of Herod were actually at Tiberias on the lakeside, only a few miles from Capernaum where Jesus established the headquarters of His Galilean work. It must have been that after the Baptist's arrest Jesus perceived a more favourable soil for the preaching of the Kingdom in Galilee than in Judæa. There He saw the fields "white already unto harvest."

Nor was His hope belied. "So when He came into Galilee, the Galileans received Him, having seen all the things that He did in Jerusalem at the Feast, for they also went unto the Feast." Jesus settled at Capernaum, and began a ministry of teaching, preaching and healing, which was received with a glad and universal welcome. At first the success of Jesus seemed unbroken, but as the days wore on, hindrances revealed themselves. The response of the people was only superficial, and a definite opposition, bitterly hostile, developed on the part of the Pharisees. The populace were misled by their material ideas of the Kingdom. They had no deep spiritual ideals. They were blind to the beauty and the sublime truth of the moral and spiritual teaching of Jesus. They were glad to be healed, and they saw in these miracles of healing the power which would prove invincible for the overthrow of the tyranny of Rome and the

establishment of a great territorial kingdom. When Jesus found that the deeper appeal of His Person had failed, and that the people, carried away by this passion for national freedom, "were about to come, and take Him by force, to make Him king," He knew that His mission in Galilee had ended.

A serious hindrance was the hostility of the Pharisees. This had not shown itself at first, but had gradually developed, as the claims of Jesus and the implications of His teaching had become more fully understood, and as the favour of Jesus with the people became more strikingly marked. It was partly to meet this opposition that Jesus called the disciples into a closer fellowship with Himself, and marked off the Twelve as an organised band of fellow-workers under His leadership. Now, when His public work had been made impossible, there yet remained the work of completing the training of His disciples. For this purpose Jesus withdrew with them from the crowded cities of the lakeside, and took them into the quiet spaces of Upper Galilee. It was in such retirement that Jesus tested the faith of His followers and drew from St. Peter the great confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Now Jesus deemed that they were ready to receive the first definite prediction of His Passion, and here is the setting of the vision on the Mount of the Transfiguration. In this revelation Jesus summed up for His disciples all the training of the Galilean Days, and in the power of this new knowledge of their Master they went forth to meet the great crisis at Jerusalem.

If the rejection of His teaching by the Galilean populace and the growing hostility of the religious

leaders had prompted Jesus to seek a place of retirement in Upper Galilee, the threatened persecution of Herod Antipas at length compelled Him to withdraw entirely from the North. The growing popularity of Jesus in Galilee had evoked the suspicions and the jealousy of Herod. Jesus had skilfully avoided all temptations to declare Himself on any political issue, and had made no attempt to convert or conciliate Herod himself, who was longing to see the miracles of this wonder-worker. Jesus knew his secret animosity, and distrusted the subtlety of "that fox." When, therefore, the disciples of John Baptist came to Jesus with the news that Herod had beheaded their master in the prison, He realised that His ministry in Galilee was no longer safe. His time had not yet come. His witness was as yet incomplete, the preparation for the founding of the Kingdom had not yet reached its final stage. At this moment, imprisonment or death would have robbed Him of all the fruits of His ministry. He therefore set His face to go to Jerusalem, and Galilee was not visited again before He had died and risen from the dead.

The Galilean Days, therefore, of our Lord's ministry have a unity of their own. They represent a particular aspect of Christ's teaching, a particular stage in His self-revelation, a particular appeal of Christ to mankind. The story of those days does not bring us to that fuller self-revelation, which marked both the closing stages of His appeal to the Jews at Jerusalem, and the teaching given to the disciples at the final Passover; nor does it lead us to the sublime mystery of the Death upon the Cross at Calvary. But in the Galilean ministry we see the unfolding of that divine

compassion, that unflinching steadfastness to holiness and truth, that unswerving obedience to the Father's Will, that undaunted witness to the Father and to the fullness of His own divine claims, that same heroic endurance of suffering, that same spirit of supreme self-oblation, which find their most majestic embodiment in the figure of the Crucified. It was that death at Jerusalem which consummated the work begun in Galilee. It was that death which gave to the failure of Galilee the sure promise of success. In the fruits of that victory on the Cross we see the full meaning of the long discipline of the Galilean ministry. The lessons of that ministry, misunderstood and disregarded by the disciples in those Galilean Days, were recalled to their memory and brought home to their hearts by the Spirit, when after Pentecost He began to show them the things of Jesus. In all history there is no greater cordial for men beaten down with a sense of failure than a study of the ministry of Jesus in Galilee. "The Galilean" is One Who has fashioned triumph out of failure, because in the perfection of human obedience He ever held fast to the Will of God, and because in the fullness of divine energy "having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end."

A Prayer in Times of Failure.

Blessed Jesu, Who in the perfection of Thy human life didst endure the discipline of weariness, failure and disappointment, grant to us the grace of Thy Holy Spirit, that in the hour of weakness, failure and dismay, we may be refreshed with the remembrance of Thy steadfastness, and being upheld by Thy Presence may find solace in Thy sufferings and hope in Thy example, and thus enduring unto the end may be made partakers of Thy glory in the fellowship of Thy heavenly kingdom.

II

THE DISCIPLES

St. Matthew iv. 18-22; St. Mark i. 16-20; St. Luke v. 1-11.

The time had come when Jesus would gather round Him in close and intimate fellowship a small company of disciples, to share His life, to witness His work, to learn of Him, and to be trained for leadership in the kingdom which He had come to found. Already His choice had fallen upon certain men of Galilee, who had been prepared by John the Baptist for the coming of the Messiah. In the Wilderness of Judæa immediately after His Baptism, two of the Baptist's disciples, Andrew, son of Jonah, and John, the son of Zebedee, had approached Jesus with the question, "Rabbi, where dwellest thou?" The Baptist himself had pointed out Jesus to them with the words, "Behold the Lamb of God." Jesus met the two enquirers with the invitation, "Come and see." They turned and accompanied Jesus, and spent with Him the whole long day, leaving Him as night fell with the conviction that at last their long quest had been fulfilled. Andrew brought his brother Simon to Jesus with the cry, "We have found the Messiah." Then Jesus Himself called Philip to Him. "On the morrow He was minded to go forth into Galilee, and He findeth

Philip. And Jesus saith unto Him, Follow Me. Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathanael."

So there came together a little company of Galileans whose lifelong hopes of the Messiah were beginning to find definite fulfilment in the Person of Jesus. He had no need yet to call them from their work. They must not come to Him in haste, nor under the stress of any sudden emotion. They must have time to reflect fully upon all that He had said. Of themselves they must realise that, if what they had begun to hope was true, it must mean the upheaval of life for them. They were being called to a compelling mission of joy and effort, of surrender and discipline, a consummation of their hopes, for which no sacrifice could be too great. So when they had found Jesus He sent them back to their fishers' work upon the Lake, that the sense of dedication might grow in them. When He had need of them they would be ready to His call.

A

The first words of Jesus with which His public ministry opened were the words of His invitation to the Galilean disciples, "Come and see." So through the ages Christ offers Himself to men. His appeal remains the same to-day. To all those who would see Jesus He says, "Come." He invites personal intercourse. He asks for trust and fellowship. We have the experience of the ages to reinforce the testimony of those first disciples. Those who have come have seen. They have come again and seen more. They have come and they too have stayed with Jesus.

Those who have come closest have seen most. And ever the words of the mystic have been found true: "I had Him and I wanted Him. I saw Him and I sought Him."

This call of Jesus challenges us to-day. "Come and see." First we must accept the call ourselves and make full proof of Christ. We must come with the eager hope and ready self-committal of St. Andrew and St. John. It is not an external, intellectual knowledge that we seek, but an experience of vital fellowship. We need guidance and a goal in life. We will ask Jesus to be the Way, and suffer ourselves to follow where He leads. We will come to Him for the resolving of our doubts, and find in Him the Truth. We will come to Him in our weakness and find in Him our Life. But to "come and see" means not to come tentatively by way of half-hearted experiment, but to come with full surrender, and with the intention to give oneself up entirely to the fullness of His fellowship, to taste to the uttermost the sweetness of His grace, to explore with all our powers the unfathomable riches of His love. Perhaps we have lost the fervour of our first coming. Perhaps we have never allowed ourselves to come very close to Him at all. We have come, but there has been no real hope of a new life, no joyous happiness, no constraint of divine love, no certainty of the Spirit's guidance, no assurance of the personal revelation of Jesus. Therefore behind all our prayers and our Bible reading, and our Communions and our obedience, there has been no sense of a real spiritual experience at all. Perhaps we want to begin again where the first disciples did, with a real desire for God. At the back of all possibility of spiritual

experience lies this fundamental desire of the soul for God. Behind all our failures in devotion, all our lassitude in prayer, behind all our weak consciousness of the Presence and the power of God, lies this primal want of a real, fervent and zealous desire for spiritual things. We want a firmer conviction of the beauty of holiness, of the reality of God, of the emptiness of life apart from Him.

We have thought that this love of holy things must naturally grow in us, as we go on day by day steadfastly observing the services of the Church, and continuing in the accustomed ways of religious life. We have imagined that mere lapse of time and the accumulated influence of habit will of themselves deepen in us the strength of spiritual desire. But experience does not prove that this is so. There must always be the fresh energy of effort and desire, always the fresh will to venture all for Christ. It is the work of the Spirit of God to create and to renew in us this desire for Christ. It is He Who quickens our desires with such a power of perseverance that the difficulties of the spiritual way are overcome with the growing zeal of love. The conflicts of life can be borne, its temptations overcome, its sufferings endured, because by the revelation of the Spirit the fellowship of Jesus is made so attractive and so necessary to the fullness of life. It will be the Spirit who must show us the things of Jesus. We must not expect to see them of ourselves. So when we are come to Jesus, the Spirit enables us to see life wholly, to see things in their true perspective, to see them as they really are. From all that is commonplace and dull the veil is lifted, and we see the gleam of the timeless and eternal. The

beauty that the world has for God Himself is seen through the eyes of Jesus. That is the secret of the reality and the power of our life in Christ. It is not an occasional emotion of ecstasy, it is not an experience that kindles us at certain moments with a sense of higher things, it is not a spiritual apprehension of God too delicate or too sacred to bear the rough ways of daily life. Rather it is the constant fellowship of One Who in all our toil is ever by our side, inspiring us with the joy of His Presence, revealing the world to us as the world in which God is always working, and claiming for God all the highest energies of human life. He calls us to make full proof of that mutual indwelling, which is the deepest experience of our fellowship with God. "We abide in Him and He in us." He abides in us as the Source of all our strength, so that for all our work we can call upon the energies of His inexhaustible power. And as we abide in Him, so over all the troubled restlessness of life there steals the spirit of God's peace, and out of the very weakness and failure of earth we are caught up into the triumphant joy of heaven. That is a present experience for those who "come and see." The companionship of Jesus is not a beautiful sentiment nor a spiritual rapture, but the most practical, the most vital, the most transfiguring power in life.

If this has been the experience of our fellowship with Jesus, we feel, like Andrew and Philip, that we must call others to share our happiness, and extend to them the invitation of Christ, "Come and see." Here lies the real test. Has Christ such complete sway in our hearts, has He made our life so happy, that by a divine constraint we cannot rest till we have

called others into that fellowship of love and power? We cannot convert, we can only bear witness. Have we done that? Is our life really a perpetual testimony to the joy and beauty of the life that is hid with Christ? How many are ready to say that Christianity has failed, not because they themselves have put Jesus to the test and have found His friendship fail, but because we have professed to be His friends and they have seen nothing attractive nor compelling in the simple witness of our lives. They have watched us more than we ever thought, and they have seen just the same uncertainty and aimlessness, the same selfish ambitions, the same joylessness and anxiety, the same dependence on material comforts, just the same self-absorbed indifference to the welfare of others, that they have marked in the lives of those who do not claim fellowship with Jesus. They see no enthusiasm, no spiritual passion, no heavenly fire. It is not indeed by any appeal of words, however eloquent, that we can expect to draw any soul to Christ, unless the whole witness of our life cries out, "We have found the Messiah. Come and see!"

A Prayer for Faithful Witness.

Almighty God, Who hast called us out of darkness into Thy marvellous light, grant that we may ever walk in the light as Thou art in the light, and having fellowship with Thee and with Thy Son Jesus Christ, may bring others to the knowledge of Thy Love, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to Whom in the Unity of the Father and the Son be all praise and glory, world without end.

B

Andrew and Peter and John, returned to their fishing at Capernaum, must often have wondered what part the new Prophet would really play in their lives,

and how they would be called into His service. He had come to make Capernaum the centre of His work. He was already teaching and healing in the city. But for them the days still held no outward change. Their fishers' trade was just as capricious and uncertain as ever. Sometimes they would return with boats weighed down with straining nets. Sometimes the night's fishing yielded only empty nets to be cleaned and dried upon the shore. On one such occasion, when they had toiled all the night and had taken nothing, they returned to find Jesus in the early morning so closely pressed by the thronging crowd upon the beach, that He was glad to climb into Simon Peter's empty boat, and to speak from it, as it stood off a little from the shore. As they cleaned and mended their nets on the edge of the crowd, the fishermen would strain to catch some of the "gracious words" that fell from His lips. When Jesus had ended, to their surprise, He called the little crews to bring their mended nets with them, and to get back into their boats. "And when He had left speaking, He said unto Simon: Put out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answered and said, Master, we toiled all night and took nothing, but at Thy word I will let down the nets." Out into the familiar waters they moved again, and at His command, even in the broad light of day they let down the nets. Hardly had the nets been placed, when they were seen to be filled with so great a shoal of fish, that Andrew and Peter had to call their partners, James and John, in the other boat to come to their help. The rich harvest of the breaking nets weighed the boats down so heavily, that they began to

sink. Simon Peter, moved between amazement at the unexpected success and fear of disaster, fell at the feet of Jesus with the cry, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." The moment of success was a moment of revelation. The moment of revelation became the moment of decision. At once Jesus flung out the challenge, for which their eager hearts had waited, "Come ye after Me, and I will make you fishers of men." With quick response they brought the laden ships to land. Never had prospect of success been so alluring, yet, at that very moment, "they left all and followed Him." Thus the four fishermen of Galilee, bound together already in tried partnership upon the Lake, entered together upon the great venture of their lives, and hazarded all for the Master, Who had come to claim His own.

We recognise in this Call of the disciples a parable of our own Vocation. What a mystery the Call of God is! But what a reality! The story of every great life is the story of man's response to this primary vocation, the call to God Himself. To the disciples, familiar with the history of their own nation, the way of God's vocation was not strange. Under the Old Covenant all the great men of the nation, the giants of action, the heroes of prophecy, the leaders of thought had been responsive to the individual call of God. And the Divine Call had been all the more manifest and notable, because it had to overcome such reluctance and had shown itself in such unexpected places. But so God's heroes had sprung up—Joseph from the prison and the pit, Gideon from the remote threshing-floor, David from the shepherd's cote, Jeremiah from the home of priestly traditions, Amos

from the fields and orchards of Tekoa, Elijah from the desert—who but God could have chosen, called, empowered such as these? And what was their nation but a people of God's choice, called to peculiar privilege and honour, elect to special responsibilities of service to the world? This was the call which Jesus came to give with new emphasis. Through His life we watch the unfolding of that message of Divine Love, which brings home to each soul the individual call of God. From home and mart and pier the disciples are called. But not only on these who are called to leadership does the choice of God fall. It comes to the lonely, the despairing, the faint-hearted, the fallen, the diseased of body and of soul, the down-trodden and the outcast. To each Christ gives the one thing needed to rouse new self-respect, to kindle hope, to remake their lives, the assurance that God cares, that God has need of them, that He calls them to Himself because He has made them for Himself, and He loves them.

That is where our sense of Vocation begins, with the certain conviction of God's love for us individually. Upon each of us, one by one, strike the full beams of the Divine Providence and Love. God's eternal purpose of love for the world carried with it the Divine plan of my life. The heavenly Architect in His omniscient knowledge left no detail of the world's progress to accident or chance. Science recognises the great principle of design, governing the evolution of life in the natural world. I recognise the same truth of ordered design in the guidance of my own personal life. I realise that in the dark, tangled maze of this world I am not left to find my way alone. The

trees are blazed, the trail is plainly marked for me, by a Love that has actually trod the way before me. This is my path. Along this way alone for me lie happiness, perfection, holiness and safety. Under the impulse of this sense of Vocation I can read aright the ordering of my life. It is God Who from the first has pointed the way. The conditions of my birth, the opportunities of opening life, my natural gifts, my friendships, my sorrows, my successes, my duties and my cares, these are the signs of God's purpose and His love. If I have neglected or abused them in the past, at least I desire to realise God's part in them now. I would realise that God holds a plan for my life ever before His eyes, and He alone can set it and hold it ever before mine, and give me courage and strength to fulfil it. He calls me as Jesus called the disciples, first to come and be with Him, that I may learn to know Him, to love Him and to long to serve Him. As the disciples went back to their fishing on the lake, and found new happiness in their old vocation, because their hearts had been fired with the love of Jesus, so when God has made Himself known to us, our old familiar work is inspired with a new dignity, and is carried through with a new perfection, while we hold ourselves ready for any new claim of service to which God may call us. "Come ye after Me." That fresh call may come at any time. Until it comes, our preparation lies in the steadfast fulfilment of our familiar duties, which God has marked out for us as the sufficient sphere of our sanctification and His glory.

Can we be sure that the call has not come and been unheeded? Is there a Vocation before me now still unrealised? There are two hindrances that must be

removed, before we can be sure that we are not losing Vocation. The first hindrance to vision is want of spiritual effort. We live so much in the atmosphere of other people's experience, and strive so little to gain a real spiritual experience of our own. Seldom indeed do we take the initiative and dare to let ourselves really loose from our old moorings. We have not the real courage for a great spiritual venture. We will not fully commit ourselves. The truth of Vocation commends itself to us in general, but it is no personal conviction impelling us with irresistible force to self-surrender, to obedience, to trust; it does not control us and shape us and carry us captive to the Will of God. We love the company of those whose lives are so ordered and mastered, we recognise the reality of their experience, we long for the peace and restful beauty of their lives, but for ourselves, we dally with our dreams, and say, like Augustine the irresolute disciple, "Not yet." And all the while those hopes press and prick within us. That Vocation that hovered before us in early days is not forgotten. The memory of the high quest on which we started still glows. There is still the remembrance of that old impulse, which just for a while held sway. We followed till we were on the verge of discovery, and then we faltered, flagged and fell away. That splendid and audacious venture for God which called us, what of it now? May not the remembrance of the ready surrender of these Galilean fishermen to the summons of Christ recall us to our highest hopes and bind us to our holiest ideals? They are not lost, they are but in abeyance. One glimpse of the Face of Christ will bring them back. Shall we not get alone with Him and go down into the depths of our soul and

front realities, find the true purpose of our life and follow it? Shall we not say with Augustine, in the crisis of his great conflict, "Why not now, why not now?"

The second hindrance to Vocation is Sin. Sin clouds the vision and dulls the ear. Sin limits the power of God's self-revelation. The disordered will sets both heart and mind in disarray and defeats the fulfilment of God's purpose in us. Without holiness no man can see the Lord. That call to holiness must be answered first. Out of it and after it comes the Vocation to special work. Many there are to-day labouring in vain to realise the call to special Vocation, restlessly uncertain, wistfully expecting the impossible, because they have not bent themselves to realise this first call to God Himself, the call to Holiness. We may be confident that God will give us abundant power to conquer the sins, whatever they may be, which hinder our Vocation, so that we shall both clearly see and perfectly fulfil His purpose for us, if without delay and without reserve we rise up and follow Him.

If Satan places hindrances in our way, God gives us many a help. In the careful study of other lives we find both the intellectual certainty of the fact and power of Vocation, and also the welcome guidance of souls who have found their happiness in obedience to God's call. Prayer, especially prayer to the Holy Ghost, enlightens the mind with the vision of God. In corporate worship, especially the worship of the Eucharist, we are lifted up into union with those who have found their vocation, and catch something of the enthusiasm of their obedience and the inspiration of their faith. But the greatest help of all is the study

of our Lord's own life, for there we trace the devotion of One, Who lives only to fulfil the Will of the Father, Whose every act glows with the beauty of Vocation.

As the Galilean Days opened out with their difficulties and disappointments, the disciples were to find their strength renewed in the growing sense of Vocation. In all the dangers and difficulties of our own lives we shall find no motive so enduring as the certainty of Vocation. Many a man will begin well, will continue well as long as his fellows applaud and admire, but in the face of failure or opposition he is found to have no power of steadfast endurance. Vocation gives a sustained power, a perseverance, an heroic persistence, which no disaster can daunt. And beneath all the strain of work there is the inexpressible happiness which comes from realising that we are the chosen, not the choosers. God Himself has called, we have but responded. He will empower those whom He calls. We are safe in His hands. So there steals over our lives that happiness of Vocation which Balzac with a touch of rare insight describes, when he puts these words into the mouth of the good priest, M. Bonnet, "When I gave myself up to the leading of God, I felt an infinite peace; all the cravings, the vanities, the cares that vex so many souls fell away from me. I felt that heaven would have a care for me. I went forth into a world from which all fear was driven out, where the future was sure, where everything was the work of God, even the silence." For how many a life that happiness waits, with its eternal joy of realised Vocation. Has not the time come when I myself can rise up gladly to the call of the Master, and

from the midst of work and of success respond gloriously to the invitation of God, "Come ye after Me"?

An Act of Dedication.

O God, I am not mine own, but Thine. Take me for Thine own. I give my heart to Thee. Purge from me all self-love. I give my mind to Thee. Enlighten me with Thy Wisdom. I give my will to Thee. Strengthen me in Thy obedience. Take from me all evil and make me wholly Thine, that I may serve Thee in faithfulness, love Thee in holiness and be wholly devoted to Thy glory.

C

As we think over this miraculous draught of fishes, we may recognise in its incidents a parable of the way in which God often calls His disciples to Him to-day. It may be illustrated by our own experience. These four disciples were found by Jesus after a night of disappointment. How often God has used the very mood of failure and defeat as the moment of His visitation. We had toiled all the night and taken nothing. There had been no lack of effort, no want of skill. But circumstances were against us, and we were very conscious of failure, and that too in the very work where we seemed to have the surest right to expect success. It was work for God. We had commended the task to His care, we had undertaken it in His name, and addressed ourselves to it in His power. It had needed effort, persistent and sustained. We spent ourselves without stint. Through the dark night of apathy, misunderstanding, and opposition we had toiled and had taken nothing. We had failed, but we had not lost courage. We would mend our nets and go back and try again. And while we prepared for

the new effort there fell upon our ears the words of Christ, as He spoke to the multitude. Our souls were heartened by the memory of His faithfulness. We were encouraged by the sense of His nearness. A new understanding of His purposes, a new kindling of hope, a new loyalty came to us, as we overheard His words. After all it was service, not success, which we had been promised. The joy of work for Christ must lie not in its obvious results, not in its easily calculated effects, but in its unselfish service of God. We had not counted the full cost; we had not realised the forces of opposition; we had not estimated our own weakness. The cause in itself was so glorious, its righteousness so manifest, its need so urgent, that we had never imagined delay in its achievement. We thought that the power of God working with irresistible might was sure to break through all obstacles, and gloriously vindicate the cause of His people. Then, as we bent our ears again to catch the message of Christ, we heard the voice of One Who would "not strive nor cry aloud." We were ministers of One Who is "meek and lowly of heart." He Himself trod the way of suffering and lowliness, of struggle and defeat, that so at length He might "send forth judgment unto victory." So we were purged of selfishness and renewed in the spirit of patient service. The nets once more were cleaned and mended, and all was ready for the next night's work.

At that unexpected moment came the call of Christ Himself to launch out straightway into the deep and let down our nets for a draught. All doubts vanished at His bidding. We might have had our misgivings; we might have hesitated to return so soon to the scene

of our failure. We might have seen the impossibility of such an unusual venture. But Jesus Himself was already in the boat. It was His own command. So we let down the nets.

Down went the nets—just the usual methods of work, the old familiar round, the simple agencies and means which we have regularly used in His service, nothing new, nothing unusual nor strange. And at once God vindicated His power by a miracle of success, success so triumphant, so bewildering in its magnitude that it robbed us of all human pride, and exalted God alone as the sole source and author of its greatness. The very wonder of it brought before us the majesty of God and revealed our own poverty and weakness. We felt ourselves unworthy to be the instruments of a power so great and holy. As the confidence and self-reliance of St. Peter stood rebuked by the sudden revelation of Divine power, so we were brought humbly to consciousness of sin. "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." The victory of God has wrought humility in man. The vision of God has brought penitence. Success coming after failure has taught us the true source of all our human triumphs. Had success always been uninterrupted we might never have risen beyond self-gratulation; we might never have seen more than the skill and perfection of our own efforts. But when so striking a wonder has broken in upon our failure, we can see God, and gain a true view of the value of our own work. We have been humbled by success because it revealed to us the nearness of God, and opened our eyes to His majesty and power.

We knew ourselves to be unworthy of His choice

and fellowship; we felt ourselves too mean to be partners of His glory. This chastened spirit of humility was what the Divine Love was waiting to find in us. It is humility which makes us truly supple instruments in the hands of God. Penitence makes us efficient in His service. Lowliness gives us worth and value as workers for God. For, realising our weakness apart from God, we bring all our powers to Him for enrichment and consecration. We trust our lowly gifts to His mighty keeping. We say with Augustine, "Thanks be unto Thee for all Thy gifts, but do Thou keep them safe for me." No gift, however insignificant or undeveloped, is too lowly for His use, nor too weak for His benediction. He can find worthy use for all.

Thus, as we gave ourselves anew to His obedience, God pointed us to higher possibilities of service. There were more spiritual ministries to which we found ourselves called. "Come ye after Me and I will make you fishers of men." New ways of ministry opened out, as we surrendered all our gifts to Him, ways in which the old experience would be renewed. In the midst of many failures and of much opposition the Divine power would yet be revealed in us. "When they had brought their boats to land they left all and followed Him." Such is the path of discipleship—leaving all. This is not merely the act of one moment, at the critical time of our first response to God's call. But it is a repeated experience at each fresh call to new service. There is always some fresh forsaking to make. The fullest forsaking to which Christ calls us lies not so much in the sphere of external relationships and material surroundings as in the inner forsaking of self. That self-forsaking is an ever-growing act; it is

never fully achieved. The disciple is ever finding something fresh in self to forsake as he goes forward in the following of the Master. The measure of the needful forsaking of external things, of the surrender of wealth, of pleasure, or of friendships, which the disciple may be called to make, differs with the conditions of each individual vocation, but the forsaking which is universal in Christian discipleship is the leaving of the "all" of that inner self. To this we find ourselves called anew at each fresh step in our discipleship.

This miracle remains to us a parable of the repeated call of the Divine Love. Failure and disappointment after work—listening afresh to the teaching of Christ—the return to work with Him and at His express bidding—success revealing God's greatness and deepening our humility—the call to higher service—the leaving of all in the new following of the Master—this is the repeated cycle of the disciple's experience to-day. The life of service has already proved to us a continual revelation not only of the faithfulness of Christ, but also of the growing possibilities of that forsaking, which when fully achieved, after all the discipline of this world's service, will leave the disciple before the Throne of God, clothed in white raiment, rejoicing in the victory of Divine Love. Each fresh obedience to the call of God, each fresh surrender of self in the path of discipleship, brings with it an increasing foretaste of that supreme reward and happiness which await the disciple in the beatific vision of eternity. "His servants shall serve Him and they shall see His Face." The vision of God upholds the disciple even here. In its undimmed splendour

hereafter it will be the ceaseless inspiration of those eternal energies of service and adoration which crown the life of discipleship.

> "To start thee on thy outrunning race,
> He shows the Splendour of His Face.
> What will that Face of Splendour be,
> When at the goal He welcomes Thee."

A Prayer for Discipleship.

Grant, Blessed Jesus, that we whom Thou hast called to Thy service may ever heed Thy call, and giving ourselves with true delight and without delay to Thy obedience may steadfastly fulfil Thy Will, and running the way of Thy commandments may ever glorify Thee, Who art made unto us Wisdom from God, our Righteousness, our Sanctification, and our Redemption.

III

IN THE SYNAGOGUES

St. Luke iv. 16–37; St. Matthew xii. 9–21.

The synagogues provided Jesus with a pulpit in every village and city in Galilee. It was not only among the Jews of the Dispersion that the synagogue was the bond of union and the constant witness to the Messianic Hope of Israel. Established after the return from Babylon, these meeting places for the worship of each small community kept alive in every Jewish settlement that new spirit of devotion and attachment to the Law, to which the discipline of the Captivity had given birth. While Jerusalem remained the undisputed centre of worship, the only place where sacrifices could be offered, the goal of frequent pilgrimage for every true and faithful Jew, the synagogues maintained an unbroken round of fixed and regular worship, in which throughout the year on every Sabbath and feast-day a common liturgy was used. The direction of the synagogue was entirely in the hands of the local authorities. No consecration nor special ordination was needed for those who conducted the services. It was a lay ministry that maintained the worship of the synagogue. A priest, if one were present, had precedence in reading the lection from the Law, but that was in no way essential. It was this freedom from

special official qualification that made it possible for the synagogues to be so numerous. A large town would have many synagogues, arranged sometimes for special craft-guilds or separate nationalities. The local congregation elected the rulers and the chief-ruler of the synagogue, who together formed the district tribunal in things spiritual, and directed the details of religious service. It was theirs to choose from the congregation those who should take part in the reading of the lessons from the Law and the Prophets, and to invite whom they would to give the address. It was natural that in such a popular and democratic institution as the synagogue, Jesus, especially in the height of His fame, would find a powerful instrument ready to His hand for the proclamation of His message.

A

Of all the synagogues in the Holy Land there was one which must have had very tender associations for Jesus—the synagogue at Nazareth. Here as a child He learned His letters with the other children of the synagogue school. Here He had gained that simple knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek versions of the sacred books of the Old Testament, which was the common educational equipment of the devout Jew of His day. Here He had worshipped in the village congregation. Here He must have been called upon from time to time to take His part in the public reading of the Scriptures. Here He had listened to the exposition of many a Rabbi and scribe, and watched the gathering burden of those traditions of the elders which "made void the word of God."

"And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into

Galilee; and a fame went out concerning Him through all the region round about. And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all. And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and He entered, as His custom was, into the synagogue on the sabbath day and stood up to read." Such were the circumstances under which He returned to the familiar place of worship. He came with a halo of fame about Him. He had achieved notoriety at Jerusalem at the feast. He had been acclaimed as the Prophet of Galilee. At Cana and at Capernaum He had worked wonders and miracles of healing. What would be His message for His own fellow-villagers of Nazareth?

When the roll had been given to Him by the attendant, Jesus found the passage in the book of Isaiah, which began with the words, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor." Whether this was the set lesson for the day, or a reading specially chosen by our Lord Himself, we cannot tell. At the end of the lesson He folded up the roll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down on the pulpit-platform for the instruction. With the eyes of all fastened eagerly upon Him, "He began to say unto them, To-day hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears." Of the actual words that Jesus spoke we have no record. But "all bare Him witness and wondered at the words of grace which proceeded out of His mouth." Here amongst those who had watched Him grow up, in whose midst the powers of that perfect manhood had developed step by step, Jesus at once proclaimed His mission as the Lord's Anointed and the Redeemer of Israel.

If He appealed to their deepest spiritual desires by drawing a picture of the sin and misery in which the life of Galilee was steeped, and revealing the reign of righteousness and peace and love, which it was His to establish upon earth, we can understand what a profound impression His winning words would have made upon His hearers. Their own experience now confirmed all that rumour had said about Him. Jesus had held them spellbound by the spiritual glory of His theme and the compelling beauty of the vision of God which He unfolded before their eyes. He had flung down before them His boldest challenge. He had appealed to their best and deepest selves. It was a critical moment when Jesus ceased and silence fell upon the synagogue. Jesus had held them under His spell. Could He keep them? Would they surrender themselves freely to the new impulses which He had stirred in their hearts? Would they give themselves frankly to His allegiance? The Kingdom of heaven had been set before them. Would they take it by violence in the new-born energy of a divine enthusiasm? And then, while the issue was still in the balance, there broke forth the cry of doubt and derision which dashed the hopes of Jesus to the ground. "Is not this Joseph's son?" All spiritual values gave way at once to the old standards of material wealth and worldly position. Who was He that He should make such promises of healing and liberation and hold out such hopes of new life? If He really possessed such powers, why did He not exercise them for Himself, and assume a position of splendid pre-eminence and authority? "Physician, heal thyself." If He had shown miracles of power in other places, let Him

perform a wonder now. That would be the test of His claims. "Whatsoever we have heard done at Capernaum, do also here in thine own country."

In the face of this spirit of unfaith and curiosity Jesus could work no miracle for His own folk. He accepted without demur the want of recognition and honour which was the lot of a Prophet in the midst of the people amongst whom he had grown up. But though Nazareth might see no miracle of power, other cities there were which should show themselves worthy of Him. As Elijah was sent to the aid of the woman of Sidon when the whole land of Israel was suffering famine, and as Elisha healed only the Syrian Naaman of his leprosy, though there were lepers in plenty in Israel, so there would be no lack of His divine help for other cities, while in His own village of Nazareth He could do no mighty work. At this "they were all filled with wrath in the synagogue." Jesus was thrust out into the street and pressed by the throng towards the brow of the cliff, over which they meant to cast Him to His death. At that very moment it seemed almost that the long-desired miracle was wrought; for with undisturbed calm Jesus turned to face His persecutors, and "passing through the midst of them went His way."

Thus ended the day of opportunity for the village endeared to Him by so many memories of love and hope. We do not know that Jesus ever returned to Nazareth. It is evident that to the evangelist St. Luke the rejection of Nazareth was typical of the whole Galilean ministry; for he places it out of historical order at the opening of his story of the Galilean Days. It may indeed have seemed to Jesus Himself a

prophecy of the failure which awaited Him yet in those cities where He had been at first so gladly acclaimed. In other places Jesus had prepared the ground for the reception of His teaching by His works of healing. Here He felt that there could be no more effective preparation than the steadfast witness of those thirty years, in which He had revealed to them the perfect pattern of true manhood. But neither the moral miracle of that stainless life, nor the miracles of physical healing which He wrought, availed to open the hearts of the Galileans to the divine majesty of His Person, nor to the profoundly spiritual nature of His mission. They looked for outward glory, for earthly pomp and splendour. They could not dissociate their Messianic hopes from thoughts of military conquest. When Jesus refused all invitations to display, they were bewildered and failed to understand. They had no power to discern the unique moral beauty of His character, nor to plumb the spiritual depths of His teaching. Thus "He came unto His own, and they that were His own received Him not."

In this first sermon at Nazareth Jesus declared His mission as the liberator. It is our great need to-day to find in Him all those energies of life and holiness and power, which are needed to "set at liberty them that are bruised." If the corrupting vice and immorality which attended Greek civilisation in the days of our Lord had produced in the hearts of that generation a fierce longing for redemption and release, so too we can mark in our own day a stronger cry for deliverance in an age, which is newly conscious of the grave and gaping defects of its vaunted civilisation. We may estimate aright the intolerable suffering of

poverty, the growth of public immorality, the bitterness of class hatred, the undisciplined love of idleness and luxury, the decay of reverence, the reckless pursuit of wealth, and all the ravages of selfishness and sin; but we shall make the very mistake of the men of Nazareth, if we think that freedom and salvation can be found by material agencies alone. It is not new economics, but new men that we want, not new environment, but new hearts. But this is the work of Christ. No standard of comfort for all classes, however high, will safeguard the life and happiness of the nation, if the spiritual character of men has not first been raised. We still are bound to low material standards like the Galileans. We seek display and judge by outward splendour. We like magnificence in our schemes and have no eye for the lowly and obscure. To-day Jesus makes a fresh appeal. He has long been in our midst, but our weak vision has seen nothing great in the perfection of His lowly life. There has been no striking miracle of divine intervention in the life of Church or Nation. But round us all the while have been those miracles of lives reclaimed from helplessness to power, redeemed from sin, renewed in holiness and faith,—miracles, whose moral wonder and spiritual beauty have escaped our purblind sight. They have been such familiar surroundings of our life, that we have seen no greatness in them. And now, if we will have it, He Who has appealed so long by the silent testimony of the quiet working of His grace in the individual lives of men, presents Himself anew to us at this crisis of our national life, and challenges us to find in Him our Redeemer.

Shall we have the insight and the courage to accept

His challenge and give ourselves into His keeping? The insight, because still He works no special miracle, but calls us only with "words of grace," which stir a deep response in our listening hearts, and it is still only with the eye of faith that we can see His royalty and His power; the courage, because we are embarking on a hard venture, and giving ourselves to a stern discipleship, in which we must be ready to face persecution. It may be that the Spirit is waiting only for our obedience to reveal in our midst a new era of pentecostal grace. It must be ours at least to pray for this and to expect it, that when the cry is raised anew, "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by," we may be found ready to welcome and worship and work with Him, Who has been anointed by the Spirit of the Lord to preach good tidings to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

A Prayer of Expectation.

Almighty and Eternal God, Who hast sent Thy Son Jesus Christ to proclaim the good tidings of redemption through the Precious Blood of His atonement, grant to us the grace of the Holy Spirit, that with eager hearts and willing ears we may receive the revelation of Thy love, and bearing fruit in every good work may look for and earnestly desire the day of Christ's coming, Who is our Hope and our Crown, our Life and our eternal Bliss.

B

At Capernaum, even though it was the metropolis of the Jews in Galilee, there was only one synagogue. It was the gift of a Roman centurion, a tribute doubtless to the good feeling which existed in this city of trade

and commerce between the peace-loving merchants and the garrison. To this synagogue Jesus was no stranger. In the first days of His popular welcome He was often invited to give the address to the congregation, and Jesus must have found the sabbath worship one of the most effective opportunities of teaching. Always Jesus had claimed the position of a public teacher of religion. Though He had never had the formal training of a professed scribe or doctor of religion, He accepted without demur the accustomed title of Rabbi. The people were not slow to recognise the profound difference between His teaching and the instruction of the scribes. The scribe never showed any effort of originality or independence of thought. He taught tradition in a traditional way. Such teachers did not deal with moral or spiritual principles, but merely gave their differing decisions on the interpretation of the elaborate details of the tradition of the Law. Every fresh interpretation only added to the burden of daily life. With infinite pedantry and dialectical skill they contrived to argue the old questions of minute ceremonial procedure which affected every slighest detail of daily duty, balancing authorities and weighing precedents with delicate precision, until they were able to define tradition anew with some added refinement and subtlety. Very different was the impression which the teaching of Jesus gave. He spoke, not as one who was interpreting an age-long tradition, but as one who was revealing new truth, who was opening new and wide avenues of spiritual thought, who was extending the horizon of life and raising eternal issues. He spoke on His own authority, on the testimony of His own

conscience, in His own right. His words appealed to the deepest, the truest and the most spiritual instincts of men. They rang with the certain note of reality and truth. He brought men face to face with God. The secrets of their own hearts were revealed. They felt the unsealing of deep springs of new spiritual consciousness, which bore witness to the truth of His words and the eternal issues of His teaching. Upon His lips indeed the word of God proved "living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart." It was this power of confronting the soul with the Presence of God, this intimate sense of compelling reality and truth, that gave to the words of Christ their tone of tranquil and serene authority. "He was teaching them on the sabbath day; and they were astonished at His teaching, for His word was with authority."

Such words of Divine authority, spoken by One Who "knew what was in man," to Whom the deepest secrets of human personality lay open, penetrated to those hidden realms of human consciousness, which were closed to every other stimulus and influence. Amongst the human wreckage of Galilee there was no sight more pathetic than the numerous figures of the insane and mentally afflicted, the tragic victims of the ignorance, vice and profligacy of a corrupt civilisation. The current explanation of this growing evil attributed it to the power of malignant spirits, who had obtained control over the personality of these degenerates. Now and then attempts were made by a long course of magical incantations to release the sufferers from

their bondage, and cast out the intruding spirit, and professional exorcists had a recognised place in the life of Palestine. But as a rule these abnormal afflictions were felt to be beyond the reach of human help, and they were borne with the sad and hopeless resignation of Eastern fatalism. In the time of our Lord the number of these sufferers was so great that they formed a special class amongst those who claimed His aid. There was hardly any gathering of men in city or village, amongst whom representatives of those "possessed with devils" were not to be found. When the first news of the unique healing powers of Jesus began to spread through Galilee, they flocked to Him for that ministry of healing and compassion, which, while it freed the body from the bondage of suffering, released the soul also from its darkness and imprisonment, and restored the whole man to the consciousness of full and free fellowship with God and with the world.

It was not strange, therefore, that amongst the people who had been drawn by the presence of Jesus to the synagogue was "a man which had a spirit of an unclean devil." Under the pressure of what seemed an alien and overmastering power this man had lost the full conscious control of his own acts and thoughts, and his outward life was a career of pitiable impotence and degradation. To all other influences and appeals both heart and mind were closed and deaf. But now the searching words of Jesus, inspired by the burning passion of His divine love for souls, and launched with the divine force of unerring insight into the hearts of men, broke through the beleaguering powers of evil that held the man's self captive, and reached the inner citadel of his soul. There was a stirring of

new personal consciousness. Powers long dormant and now pitifully helpless were awakened to a sense of life. The forces of evil felt the threat to their dominion, they realised the invincible sovereignty of goodness and truth, before which their empire must totter. "He cried out with a loud voice, Ah, what have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee Who Thou art, the Holy One of God."

It was no unusual thing for question and answer, and dialogue of conference to follow upon the address of the teacher in the synagogue service. But this was an unwonted excitement for the congregation. Jesus met the passionate outburst with the calm word of authority, "Hold thy peace and come out of him." At once the man fell to the ground in a paroxysm of uncontrollable collapse, but in a moment he rose sound and unharmed, restored to full possession of all his powers of mind and soul, master of himself and of his destiny. "When the devil had thrown him down in the midst, he came out of him, having done him no hurt."

The amazing thoroughness of this outward miracle of authority confirmed and emphasised the inner witness of heart and conscience, which had already attested the divine source from which alone such words of authority could come. "What is this word? for with authority and power He commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out." In such maladies as these there was always the suggestion not only of the unique paralysis of the highest powers of human personality, but also of the triumph of evil in its most devastating form. The "word of authority" revealed

the penetrating power of the spiritual influence which Jesus exercised, while it displayed also the victory of holiness. We do well to-day to recall the sovereignty of Christ in even the most secret and hidden realms of spiritual life. We may discard the more naïve and simple explanation by which the Jews of Galilee accounted for these malignant forms of moral and spiritual distortion. Some may be unable to think that there are unseen personal agencies of evil, so powerful and so malign, that they can defeat and defy the powers of the individual will, can produce mental chaos and bodily convulsion, and hold in bondage all the spiritual faculties of man. Yet when science has uttered its last definition, and psychology has reached its latest discovery, there remain mysterious and formidable derangements of human life and consciousness, for which we can find no explanation. The final explanation, no doubt, may come one day. Meantime it is of the greatest encouragement to know that there is no hidden recess of human nature into which the light of Christ's Presence may not penetrate, no mastery of disease, however subtle, no devilry of influence, however insidious and tyrannical, which will not give way before the word of Christ's authority. Even to the most sane and normal of us there come moments of surprise, when we realise something of the vast and uncontrolled forces which are ever at work in the dark realm of our subconsciousness. When we do not know ourselves, Jesus knows us. When we cannot control ourselves, Jesus can release our imprisoned faculties and give us freedom in His service.

There are times when through the depression of

bodily fatigue or illness, or through oft-repeated surrender to the same familiar temptation, we feel hemmed in and mesmerised by invincible powers of evil. We cannot mobilise our forces of defence, we lie open and exposed to every attack. It is then that we need to remember that, for all his specious appearance of indomitable strength, our enemy is a beaten and discredited foe, and Jesus has power to redeem us from captivity and restore us to ourselves. We must survey life from the side of the Victor. In the very moment of temptation and assault we must make our act of faith in the sufficiency of Christ's "word of authority" to drive away all evil. Thus we strengthen our knowledge of His power, and give intensity and permanence to our sense of His victorious fellowship. We fail to move about as victors in the midst of our trials and temptations because we are not secure enough of His triumph. We must trust in His "word of authority," and be freed from the tyranny of evil.

The mastery of Jesus over the human soul disclosed by this miracle brings comfort to us as we are faced with the problem of the insane. It is a very great relief to be assured that the derangement of mind which shows itself to us in so many painful and distressing ways of outward incoherence, does not prevent the access of Jesus to the soul. The mind is no longer a sure link between the sufferer and the world of sense. Its machinery is broken, its power of interpretation and its organs of expression are impaired, and have ceased to be trustworthy, so that we have no clear window into the soul; but there is no hindrance to the vision of God. Lives that in such illness spend themselves outwardly in paroxysms of

violent utterances and storms of bodily unrest, may yet at those very moments of extreme passion be wrapped in the interior peace of a profound calm, lost in the vision of God. The lesion of the brain may hide our friend from us. We have lost our link of communication. All the accustomed marks and signs by which we read the true self within are gone. But it is not so with God. Sometimes it is as though mental illness took men into retreat with God. Some have recovered to bear witness to the inner peace, the heavenly fellowship and spiritual illumination which their souls enjoyed at the very moment when their minds and bodies were labouring under the most uncontrollable excitement. The appeal of Christ breaks through to the inner self, and communication with God is maintained unbroken, when fellowship with man is no longer possible. This is the work of the indwelling Spirit, showing to the soul the things of Jesus, preparing for His word of authority a ready welcome and obedience. As we follow Jesus through the ministry of healing which marked the Galilean Days, and see the redemption which He brought to those who felt themselves the tortured and helpless victims of the malign spirits of evil, we may be sure that there is no mental imbecility nor moral deformity to-day, however deep-seated or degrading, which can make the soul impervious to the light of the Spirit, or deaf to the authoritative word of Jesus Christ.

A Prayer for the Mentally Afflicted.

Lord Jesus, Eternal Wisdom and Incarnate Love, Who by Thy wearing of the crown of thorns hast expiated all the sin of human thought and borne all the suffering of the human mind, look with compassion upon those who have lost control of mind

or will, drive from them every evil possession, enlighten their souls with the peace of Thy Presence and restore them to fellowship with us in fullness of life and thought, through Thy mercy, Who wast manifested that Thou mightest destroy the works of the devil, and redeem us from all iniquity and sanctify us wholly in spirit, soul and body unto the day of Thy coming.

C

As the Galilean ministry developed the hostility of the Pharisees became more marked, and every word of Christ was subject to the most jealous scrutiny. In the worship of the synagogue in particular Jesus was carefully watched. He had put such a new interpretation on the freedom of the Sabbath that a special interest was attached to all that He did or said at the Sabbath worship of the synagogue. Of all the charges brought against Jesus by the Pharisees there was none so weighty as this, that He violated the Sabbath rest by disregarding all the meticulous rules, and abrogating the precious code of prohibitions and regulations with which rabbinic tradition had sought to safeguard the sanctity of the seventh day. The Sabbath had become a burden which no man could bear. Jesus setting aside the intricacies of this human tradition, went back to the original purpose for which the Sabbath was instituted: it was for rest and worship. Man was master of the Sabbath to use its opportunities for this very purpose. Jesus showed what He meant by His own practice. While He was careful not to ask unnecessary labour of any man on that day, He observed the Sabbath worship with regularity, but was ready and eager to serve His fellows with any ministry of healing or help which was demanded by their pressing needs.

The Sabbath was marked as much by His miracles of healing as by His teaching and preaching.

On one memorable Sabbath on the outskirts of Capernaum Jesus passed with His disciples through the cornfields on His way to worship in the familiar synagogue. The disciples plucking the ears of corn and rubbing them in their hands had violated the traditional rules of Sabbath rest, as the Pharisees were very quick to notice. Jesus met their strictures with the principle, "The Son of Man is lord of the sabbath," producing instances of the increased work for the priests in the Temple which the special services of the Sabbath demanded, and passed on His way to the synagogue. He was received with eager excitement, for there amongst the congregation was a man with a withered hand. Would Jesus heal him? With that informal freedom of question and answer which was characteristic of the service at the conclusion of the address, "they asked Him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day? that they might accuse Him." Jesus replied that the service of help which any one of them would most readily give to a sheep fallen into a pit on the Sabbath day might certainly be rendered to a fellow man in need, for "How much then is a man of more value than a sheep?" And Jesus recalled the original humanitarian purpose which underlay the institution of the Sabbath, when He gave the clear and challenging decision, "Wherefore it is lawful to do good on the sabbath day," and illustrated His meaning at once by healing the sufferer before Him. "Then saith He to the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he stretched it forth, and it was restored whole as the other." Thus our Lord went on His way doing

good, undisturbed by the cavilling opposition which gathered about His ministry of love and healing, and He continued to make the synagogue the frequent home of His teaching and the scene of His self-revelation.

Every miracle of Jesus seems to have been a response to faith. Where there was no faith there was no miracle. Thus it was said of His own village Nazareth, "He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." In this miracle in the synagogue at Capernaum faith is seen at its highest. For at the command of Christ the paralysed arm, withered and useless and incapable of movement, was urged forward by the faith of the sufferer, and lo, it answered to his call. Before he felt it able to move he made the act to move it. This is the way of faith. It is the very secret of spiritual progress, to exercise a simple faith like this, which acts immediately upon the creative word of Christ before any outward sign of power has been revealed.

Thus in the work of our vocation we do not wait till we can feel that we have power to do the work assigned to us, but, once conscious of our God-given task, out of the very sense of our powerlessness we begin to work, and as we make the effort the power is given. So it is with all the obediences of the religious life. At the beginning of each day in our morning prayers we look forward to the work of the day, and out of the consciousness of our weakness pledge ourselves to fulfil the tasks to which the Holy Spirit calls us, knowing that when the actual moment of need has come, if we have faith to make the effort, the work will be achieved in the power of the indwelling Spirit. When, in the light of the Spirit's guidance, we have

been led to make some great decision, we shall not be deterred because we do not feel ourselves already equal to the chosen task. We shall believe that now indeed is the moment of decision, and God has guided us rightly in our choice. When the moment comes to carry out that decision, the help of God will be just as effective in enabling us to be equal to our work. God does not give us to-day the strength to fulfil the duty of to-morrow.

The same principle of faith helps us to use aright the inexhaustible grace of the altar. As we kneel to receive this sacramental gift we have no sense of joy, no consciousness of spiritual enrichment; but when the duty must be done, out of the numbness and powerlessness of our feelings, we set in motion our obedience, and the power of God is manifested in us. This is the path of progress and the way of spiritual growth. We walk by faith and not by sight. In proportion as we are the obedient servants of God, we approach the impossible with the assurance of success. In the very act of motion the dead limbs find their mobility. At every crisis this principle finds fresh proof of its truth and of its usefulness. It is so that God's greatest victories in man have been achieved. It is so that man can make proof of his highest powers and find himself unhindered in his co-operation with God.

A Prayer for Faith.

Most merciful and loving Lord, Who art a strong tower to those who trust in Thee, and hast promised to those that love Thee such good things as pass man's understanding, strengthen our hearts, increase our faith, and quicken our hope, that we may readily obey Thy holy will and firmly believe Thy gracious promises, and may be found worthy to be workers together with Thee for the hastening of Thy kingdom to the praise of Thy glory, Who art called Faithful and True, our Priest, our Prophet, and our King.

IV

FRIENDS AND FOES

St. Matthew ix. 1-8; St. Mark ii. 1-12; St. Luke v. 17-26.

Capernaum had become associated with Jesus in the minds of the people of Galilee. They recognised it as "His own city," and at the house of Simon Bar-Jonah by the waterside they knew that He could readily be found.

A

The fame of Jesus had spread rapidly beyond the borders of the Northern Province. The surprise and resentment which Jesus had already roused at Jerusalem in those brief days of witness which marked the beginning of His public ministry, had been renewed and deepened by the reports of the wonderful works which accompanied the teaching of the Galilean Days. The official leaders of the Rabbinic world quickly realised that the growing success of Jesus with the people would prove a grave danger to their own authority and influence, unless His teaching could be effectively challenged, His works discredited and His claims disproved. It was not a matter which would brook delay. It was impossible to wait till Jesus Himself should return to the capital. To be most effective, the blow must be struck in the very scene of

His success. If in the presence of His enthusiastic Galilean followers He could be convicted of blasphemy, then His influence would be effectually destroyed and their own position would be secured from attack. To this end a travelling commission of Rabbis and scribes was formed, which started from Jerusalem and gathered to itself other leaders of religion and doctors of the Law from the chief cities through which it passed on its journey to the North: "Pharisees and doctors of the Law which were come out of every village of Galilee and Judæa and Jerusalem." Doubtless the people of Capernaum were awed by the arrival of a commission so authoritative and so imposing in numbers. They were led to the house of Simon. But Jesus was found to be away on a mission tour beyond the Lake. They must, therefore, wait patiently for His return. So while they made the purpose of their visit known and pursued inquiries in the city, they posted a watch upon the hillside above the Lake to keep a look-out for Simon's boat and give warning of the Prophet's return.

But it was not only His enemies that kept eager watch for the coming of the Master. There were friendly eyes too that scanned the horizon patiently for the first sight of those well-known sails. During the absence of Jesus there was one soul that had begun to long earnestly for His coming. He was a young paralytic, who had lain in Capernaum a helpless sufferer, unable to move. The Jewish doctors had looked upon his incurable illness as the sure evidence and just punishment of grave sin. There was no hope of bodily recovery and no ministry of spiritual comfort, which they could give. Cast back upon himself, he

would become the prey of morbid self-scrutiny and remorse. Sins seemed to rise up and mock him in his helplessness. Even the steadfast sympathy and kindness of good friends had been unable to rouse him from his fears. But if he still could see no light, his friends at least would not despair. There was yet one way of help that had not been tried. As they went to and fro in the city, they had often been brought face to face with Jesus. They had heard His words of grace, they had seen His miracles of love. They had marked His compassion for the sick and His welcome to the sinful. None had ever turned to Him in vain. They were sure that He could help. But the sufferer himself, stricken with the consciousness of sin and fearful with the shyness of the sick, could not dare to imagine himself in the presence of One so holy and so great. How could he look Him in the face? How could he ask Him to his house? But his friends persisted, till their faith prevailed. There was no need to ask Jesus to the house. They would themselves carry the lad, as they had seen so many sick folk carried, and lay him in the path of Jesus, as He passed through the streets. So their faith overbore all his hesitation and he leaped to their great hope. But at the very moment when his decision was made, Jesus was found to be away. He had left the city for mission work across the Lake, but He would soon be back. So the faithful friends set a watch to give the first signal of His return. Thus two watchers waited on the cliff at Capernaum for the coming of Jesus.

These two watchers represent the two very different classes of men who wait for Jesus to-day. There are those who seek Jesus only for controversy. They

resent His claims, they question His authority. They feel rebuked at the power He wields over the hearts of men. They see that His personality is marked by features which pass beyond the limits of their own experience. Yet He must be judged by their standards and weighed by the measure of their own capacity. They come as judges, not as suppliants. They have no sense of need. There is no consciousness of sin. So while the supreme moral beauty of His character makes no appeal to them, and the crucial significance of the salvation which He brings is disregarded, they quibble at the form of His teaching and lie in wait to entangle Him in His talk.

But there are others who await with eagerness the coming of Jesus. They have realised their need; they are conscious of their weakness. They have faith in His power to help. For themselves and for others alike they can find no other way of deliverance, no other source of strength. In their own lives they know well the crushing weight of moral impotence, the paralysing influences of repeated sin, the futility of even the strongest will, if it be merely self-reliant. They know that the power of Christ is in their midst. He moves among them freely in the beauty of holiness, in the strength of divine omnipotence, in the winning tenderness of pardoning love, in the glory of divine ministries of healing, which bring new life to the body and new hope to the soul. They have seen those who have touched but the hem of His garment restored to vigour and health. They have seen souls that had been distracted and tortured with the spirits of evil brought back to the peace of faith and to the happy fellowship of social service. They have seen

lives re-made and re-created in the power of the Spirit of God. But hitherto they have only watched among the wondering crowd. Now they wish to bring their own lives for His consecration. They can no longer stand apart. Among all the forces that work for good among their fellows in the uplifting of social and industrial life, they can see none that has in it any power of enduring spiritual re-creation, if the recognition of the supremacy of Christ in human life be refused. They have been conscious long enough of the sins of selfishness, avarice, and worldly ambition, which mar the unity and fullness of industrial effort, and imperil the progress of the nation. Now they have found the way of release. They are convinced that there is no greater happiness for themselves and no more precious service that they can render to their country than to bring the nation to the feet of Jesus. But the way is not easy. Yet their purpose is determined and their conviction sure. They wait for Christ to reveal Himself. They look eagerly for the signs of His coming, and long ardently for His return, that He may open to them the way of help and fulfil all their desires.

A Prayer for the Help of Jesus.

Blessed Jesus, Who hast borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, satisfy us with Thy Mercy, and strengthen us with Thy Might, that in all our trials and temptations we may find peace in Thy Presence and safety under Thy Protection, Who art our Hope and our Strength, our very present Help in trouble.

B

At last the familiar sail of Simon Peter's boat was seen, and the watchers on the shore gave the signal of Christ's approach. The Rabbis gathered to the house

of Simon, while the friends of the sick man made preparations to carry the sufferer into the presence of Christ. Glad crowds welcomed Jesus and followed Him eagerly to the house. The courtyard was filled with people, and as Jesus stood on the balcony that ran round the inner court, His eyes rested upon the deputation from Jerusalem with their faces of set hostility and watchful expectation. Behind them were ranged the people of the city, filling up the court and overflowing through the narrow gateway into the street beyond. As Jesus looked at the Pharisees He read their hearts and knew their purpose. Here was fresh field for the seed of the Sower. He began to speak of His mission. He threw out His appeal to the weary and heavy-laden. In Him, the Meek and Lowly, all men might find rest for their souls. His yoke was easy and His burden light. So He would speak, probing their hearts with gracious words of heavenly wisdom and love, which baffled their enmity and gave no opening for their spite.

But the opening which the malice of His enemies could not devise was offered by the unlooked-for interruption of His friends. In the midst of Jesus' words the sick man arrived, borne on his bed by his faithful friends. They had come as soon as they could, only to find the courtyard full and the gateway blocked. But love would find a way. Turned back from the gate, they carried their burden up the open stairway that led to the roof of the house, and there, breaking through the roof, they let down the sufferer at the feet of Jesus. Speechless and confused with the sudden notoriety which had been thrust upon him, the frightened man heard himself addressed in gentle

tones of firm authority, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee." Jesus had read the unspoken agony of his mind, and in one brief moment had lifted from him the intolerable burden of his sin. At once there was a stir among the Pharisees. He had spoken blasphemy. He had usurped the prerogative of God. "Who can forgive sin but God alone?" He had presumed to bestow pardon and to declare forgiveness. But Jesus had a ready way of attesting the truth of His claims. "Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins are forgiven, or to say, Arise and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins (then saith He to the sick of the palsy), Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thy house. And he arose and departed to his house."

The evident miracle of healing which no cavilling nor criticism could refute was Christ's effective answer to those who challenged the truth of His Deity, and questioned the authority of His teaching. But while Jesus was thus silencing His adversaries by the simple majesty of His creative word, He was also throwing light on the deepest problem of Jewish religious thought, the nature of sin and its relation to human suffering.

"Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven." Jesus had truly probed the real anguish of the sufferer's heart. No word had been spoken of sin. The man had been thrust before Christ, just as he was, without any introduction or uttered request. And Jesus knew how to give him at once the most profound relief. The suffering of the paralysed body was evident to all. The man lay there motionless, a pitiful, twisted wreck.

But there was an evil worse than any bodily ill. It was not suffering, but sin, that lay at the root of all human misery. That was the significance of these first words of Jesus. It was not that the palsied man had been a grievous sinner, or that his suffering was the direct result of any individual sin of which he had been guilty. But always, and in all cases, the lightest sin is essentially evil, while suffering is not. It was this which the sick man had dimly begun to recognise; it was this which his happy experience of forgiveness confirmed. At the same Hands he received healing and forgiveness. It was but a light thing for the same power that forgave sins to set free the fettered limbs. Forgiveness was not only the more difficult but the more essential gift. Men can enter into life maimed or halt, but they cannot enter guilty and stained with sin.

There was never an age which needed to learn this lesson more surely than our own. Bodily suffering is denounced as the paramount evil in human life. It must be eliminated at all cost, or it must be denied to have any real existence. Such teaching about suffering has no place in the life or words of Jesus. For Him sin is the fundamental evil. It is the one source of misery in human life. Suffering in itself carries with it no taint of sin. We can suffer according to the Will of God. We can never sin according to His Will. The Sinless One Himself was the Man of suffering and sorrow. Sin is the only evil, the one defiant hostility to God. Suffering is only evil as it is made by us the occasion of sin. It is a great school of character. Even of the perfect Man it is said that He learned obedience by the things He suffered. Only

as we study the life of Jesus Himself, and enter into the true meaning of His Holiness, can we view sin and suffering in their right relation. It is because men fail to appreciate the gravity of moral issues, because they do not set a true value upon righteousness, nor realise the ruin of sin, that they fear suffering more than they hate sin. Jesus revealed what Holiness meant in human life. It was the power which made suffering a sanctifying influence in life. It did not abolish it, but it gave it its true place as a great discipline of character, a scourge of all selfish impulses and a spur to courage. In revealing holiness Jesus gave men the true measure of sin. Sin was the revolt of man's innermost self from the Will of God. Only perfect holiness could see sin in its true horror and shame. But at the very moment that sin stood revealed in its utter foulness and depravity Christ declared that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins. The way of forgiveness was revealed.

The test of our faithfulness, then, to the teaching of Christ is this. Do we hate sin as the ruin of human life? Do we use suffering as the call of God to a fuller obedience and a deeper holiness? Do we seek the forgiveness which the Son of Man has power on earth to bestow? That forgiveness has been won by the suffering of the Sinless. The atoning power of the Precious Blood of Jesus avails to-day for the pardon of all our sin. We must seek that pardon, that we may have real, abiding happiness in the midst of suffering and trial. "Son, be of good cheer." We lack the cheerful brightness, the invincible gladness of the Christian life, because we do not seek forgiveness and live in its power. Jesus has put that forgiveness

always within our reach. "Whosesoever sins thou dost remit, they are remitted unto them." So through the sacramental Ministry of Absolution in His Church the Son of Man exercises His power on earth to forgive sin. The gift of the Spirit to the soul is the gift of forgiveness. That is the fruit of His first indwelling, and He abides in our souls ever as the Divine Minister of Absolution. We may seek that forgiveness, as He may guide us, in the Sacrament ordained for that great purpose, in which through the medium of human priesthood the same Holy Spirit applies to sinful souls the merits of the precious Blood of Jesus. Or we may seek forgiveness in the renewal of the grace of the indwelling Spirit, which is God's response to penitence and prayer. Or we may seek it in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, in which the gift of the Sacred Humanity of Jesus renews the soul in holiness and peace. But seek it we must. For the pardon of Jesus is that peace which passeth understanding, without which there is neither happiness in this life nor hope of the world to come.

A Prayer for Forgiveness.

God most Holy, Who has sent Thy Son Jesus Christ to die for our sins, and to rise again for our forgiveness, grant that with penitent and contrite hearts we may seek Thy Divine pardon, and that being washed white in the precious Blood of the Lamb, we may daily renew our souls in gladness and attain at last to Thy perfect service, Who livest and reignest God omnipotent and eternal.

C

"And seeing their faith, He said, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee." It is clear from these words that among the motives which stirred Jesus to this act of mercy the deep faith of the sick man's friends played

an important part. The help which the friends gave was not confined to their witness to the power of Jesus, nor to the rousing of the sick man's hope, nor did it end with their courageous bearing of him into the presence of the Healer, but their own deep faith was a genuine factor contributing essentially to his healing.

In this miracle Jesus illustrates the great principle of the unity and fellowship of the human race. Mankind was never contemplated by God as an aggregate of separate individuals. The perfection of human life is not the perfection achieved by the completed glory of isolated units, however wonderful each may be in its own developed beauty. But there is a fellowship inherent in human life by the very terms of its creation. Mankind is essentially a brotherhood, bound together by social ties and obligations and by unity of life and principle. It is this solidarity of human life which leaps over the barriers of space and time, and welds generations together in one common life and destiny. No man ever lives to himself alone. However dimly realised, his life is part of the great common life of mankind. When this is understood, it is more easy to realise how sin has worked to the undoing of all. This same principle, which has laid the whole world under sin, was used by Christ for the saving of mankind. Christ came as the representative Man, summing up in Himself all the races and generations of men, to offer a racial obedience to the Will of God, which had been violated by human sin. Through His obedience—"the obedience of the one"—grace was made to abound to many. Because of the fellowship of the human race, His offering could be vicarious,

Jesus illustrated the working of this vicarious principle in the relations between man and man, when He accepted the faith of the four friends as the ground of His benediction of the sick man. It was the energy of their faith which set free the miraculous power of Christ for the healing of their friend.

The principle which operates in every sphere of human life finds its most perfect expression in the fellowship of the Church. Naturally so, for the unity of the Church is the unity of the life of God. This is the secret of the power of intercession, of the far-reaching influence of holiness and of the mystery of suffering. The lives of all those who are bound with us in the fellowship of the Body of Christ can be stirred by the forces of our own spiritual life. In ways unknown to us, we are all touched by the pervasive influence of lives that are lived in close union with Christ. Their radiant powers of holiness, courage and love unconsciously create an atmosphere in which goodness and truth become more attractive and more attainable to those who have no such sources of strength and happiness within themselves. It is for us who believe, to strengthen our faith by the remembrance of this creative and redemptive energy, which fellowship with Christ confers. In those moments of doubt and sadness which the vision of human sin and failure so often brings, we need to rally ourselves with the memory of this irresistible power for goodness, which we are always able to exert. Our moments of prayer may seem moments of dryness to ourselves. We may feel no warmth of emotion, we may have no uplifting sense of the nearness and sweetness of Jesus. We may have to say with Mère Chantal, " My prayer is nothing

but distraction and a little suffering," but if there is effort and faith, if there is the giving of the heart, then the power of our prayer knows no defeat. Its energy is not lost. By the steadfastness of our faith and the earnestness of our devotion we have reinforced the courage of the weak and brought help to the sinful and sorrowing, whose names are known only to God. Our lives have entered theirs and lifted them up to higher things. What wonder if we feel tired and worn, if such "virtue" has gone out of us? Others have been carried along with the impulse of our devotion and stablished with the strength of our unshaken faith.

Jesus looking upon the obedience of the faithful can see the promise of faith in those who do not yet believe. Who can doubt that the faith of the four friends was already seen by Jesus to be a creative factor in the faith of the sick man? His faith had not yet come to birth, but Jesus saw it as it soon would be, and gave the pardon which faith alone could use. So where human eyes may see no light, Jesus can always see those myriad spiritual ties of unity and fellowship, which link our human lives in one effective brotherhood of power and love and glory. It is this unity which God makes fruitful in all our human ministries of faith and service. The saving of our own souls is so great a matter that we are tempted to look no further than ourselves. We have to learn that our own salvation is not an end in itself, but only a means. We are saved that we may serve. We are saved by serving. We are redeemed that we may be agents of redemption. We are blest that we may bring benediction to others. Every element of strength and spiritual

force which we derive from fellowship with Jesus creates new powers of service.

Thus the remembrance of this miracle may help to add perseverance and hope to our simple habits of intercession. Our prayers bear many an unknown sufferer into the Presence of Christ, overcoming all opposition, winning a way through all difficulties. Jesus, Who is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever, looking upon this evidence of our faith, is able to release His wonder-working powers for the relief of those whom we lay at His feet in prayer. So we are made co-operators with Christ for the healing and redemption of the world.

But if prayer is an evidence of a faith that works wonders through the power of human fellowship, so also is suffering. Fortitude in bearing pain, cheerful endurance of prolonged infirmity, courage under acute anguish,—these too are ways by which we can bring the help of a living faith to the aid of those who are in need of Christ's healing. Unconscious indeed they may be of our service, but the vital energy of our faith in suffering bears them on towards God, and our very pain is blest to the comfort of other sufferers. We who have been allowed to know "the fellowship of His sufferings" are able to bring to other lives "the power of His resurrection."

It needed four friends to bring this one sufferer to Christ. It needs the united effort of many working and praying together in concerted union, in corporate association, using all the energies of living fellowship which the brotherhood of the Church provides, to bring a single soul to God. When we unite in guilds of intercession, and make our common prayers together,

when at the altar a common intention is given to our petitions as we plead the Sacrifice of Christ, when we join with others in a common effort for the increase of righteousness or for the teaching of the Faith, we can have before us the picture of the faithful comradeship of these four friends in their work of common devotion. In the gravity of the difficulties that beset us, in the power which sin derives from the union of all the forces of evil in a common resistance to that which is good, we see the necessity of using to the full all the resources which fellowship, in the power and in the service of Christ, can bring. The unity of the Church is not a happy accident but a vital necessity of its life and work. There is no work of love or prayer in the life of the Christian, however simple and familiar, in which we may not use more fully and more faithfully these vital powers of fellowship in Christ.

These are days in which the claims of fellowship are more freely urged. At present the chief energies of fellowship are directed towards the improvement of sport and amusement, in efforts of industry and commerce, in the pursuit of wealth and the extension of business. In all these spheres fellowship and association, guilds and unions and clubs, are the essentials of success. There is no reason why the children of this world should always be allowed to be wiser than the children of light.

It must be ours in that deeper region of the spiritual life to put to the proof all those powers of fuller and more abiding fellowship, which Jesus has created in the unity of His Church. We must think in terms of fellowship, we must pray in fellowship, we must regard holiness as a social not an individual virtue,

we must do our work for God in fellowship. It is under the figure of the fellowship of a Holy City that our eternal happiness is foretold. That happiness begins now, as we try each day to realise in prayer and service that "if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the Blood of Jesus His Son cleanseth us from all sin." It became the experience of the pardoned paralytic, that just as the healing of his crippled body had opened to him new avenues of human fellowship in the intercourse of life, so the forgiveness of sins had made accessible to him all those deeper powers of spiritual fellowship, which flow from union with Christ. They are powers of heavenly life and eternal blessedness. For he who owed so much to the blessings of human fellowship would eagerly confirm the witness of the Apostle when he said, "our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ."

A Prayer for Faith and Fellowship.

Almighty God, Who hast bound us to Thee and to one another in the fellowship of Thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, grant that by the faithfulness of our prayers, by the holiness of our lives and by the zeal of our service, we may help to bring others to the knowledge of Thy love, in the Faith and Unity of Thy Holy Church, through the merits of Jesus Christ, our Blessed Advocate and Redeemer.

V

JAIRUS

St. Matthew ix. 18–26; St. Mark v. 21–34; St. Luke viii. 40–56.

High in repute among the notables of Capernaum was Jairus the ruler of the synagogue. As a leader in the religious life of Capernaum Jairus must have been well known to Jesus. And Jesus was no stranger to Jairus. At the bidding of Jairus Jesus had spoken in the synagogue. When Jesus had moved forward after the reading of the Law and the Prophets to take the seat of the teacher, it was Jairus who called Him to the task. It was at such a moment that the crucial discourse on the Living Bread was spoken—rich testimony to the frank use which Jesus made of such special opportunities of witness.

A

Jairus had been touched by the beauty of the message of Jesus, in Whom his simple insight had recognised a Prophet of God, a Prophet in Whom the very Spirit of God was present to work miracles of power and healing. To whom should he turn in trouble but to Jesus? And trouble indeed had cast its shadow over the ruler's house. His only child, a

daughter of twelve years old, lay dying. When life seemed ebbing fast, there was but one hope left. Jesus should come and lay His hand upon her and she would live. Men watched with sympathy as the ruler passed through the narrow streets. They guessed his errand, for they knew his sorrow. Friends guided him to the Prophet's side. Jesus, returned but now from the eastern side of the lake, was speaking to the people on the shore. "And when Jesus had crossed over again in the boat unto the other side, a great multitude was gathered unto Him, and He was by the sea." The crowd made way for the ruler, and Jesus turned to see Jairus bowing at His feet. Jairus asked that He would come at once and lay His healing hand upon the dying child that she might live. Jesus immediately moved forward, accompanied by the disciples, still exultant at the welcome which the people of Capernaum had once more given to the Master, and followed by the multitude alert for some new miracle.

The crowd pressed so closely upon Jesus that no one noticed how a poor woman following just behind Him had touched the blue tassel of the outer garment flung over His shoulder. But Jesus knew, for He felt "that virtue had gone out of Him." And He stopped to complete in the suffering woman the perfect cure of both soul and body, which the touch of faith had begun. The delay was not long, but it was enough to test the faith of the anxious father. It seemed indeed that it had proved the failure of his last hope. For, while Jesus was speaking His last words of comfort to the trembling woman, messengers arrived from the ruler's house, and were telling Jairus that the child was dead. There was no need to trouble the Master

any further. Jairus was still by the side of Jesus, and Jesus heard the message, but "not heeding the word spoken, He saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Fear not, only believe." It was a supreme test of faith. The procession started forward again, the people filled with new wonder at what they were about to witness. At the ruler's house they found all the signs of mourning. The courtyard was filled with tumult. The hours between death and burial were but few, and the hired mourners had already begun their dirge. For a moment the noise was hushed, as the father's presence was recognised and Jesus was seen to be with him. Then the laments broke out afresh. Jesus at once sought to still them with the words, "Why make ye a tumult and weep? The child is not dead, but sleepeth." But they knew better. Had not some of them seen the dead child? And were the household of Jairus so foolish that they would send for the mourners if there were no dead to mourn? So "they laughed Him to scorn." But Jesus would not be denied. He Himself dismissed all the flute-players and singers, and taking with Him the father and mother of the child and three of His disciples Jesus led the way to the room where the child lay. And there in the hush of faith and quickening hope Jesus took the child by the hand and called unto her, "Talitha, cumi," "Damsel, arise." And "straightway the damsel rose up and walked." And Jesus gave her to her parents, bringing back both parents and child to the sound and normal realities of life by the injunction that "something should be given her to eat."

So startling a miracle was too marvellous to be talked about. For the parents' sake it was not good

that they should live in the atmosphere of miracle, and for His own sake Jesus did not wish to draw popular attention to His powers, lest the spiritual nature of His mission should be lost in the outward glory of His miracles. It was probably the memory of this miracle, combined with the fresh wonder of the feeding of the five thousand, that fired the people presently with the desire to make Him king. But for the moment He, Who but lately had said to the healed demoniac of Gadara, "Go to thy house to thy friends and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee," now charged the parents earnestly "that no man should know this."

A Prayer for Trust in the Power of Christ.

Jesu, Lord of pity and of power, grant that as we read the story of Thy most Holy life, we may grow in faith, and in all dangers, both of body and soul, may find help in Thee, Who art the Resurrection and the Life, Lord God omnipotent and eternal.

B

It is remarkable with what simplicity the Gospels speak of this crowning miracle of power at Capernaum. Never before had Jesus showed Himself so convincingly the Lord of life. In the presence of His purity and power, disease, infirmity, and bodily weakness in all its disabling forms had lost their terror. "Virtue" had gone out from Him to heal sickness of every kind. But never yet had Jesus manifested His power to recall the spirit of man from the realm of death, and to restore the dead to life. Yet, when it has actually happened, it seems the fitting climax to the growing

faith with which Jesus is accepted by the people of Capernaum.

It is well to-day to recall the power of Jesus over the spirit of man, both in life and in death. It is true that in the days of His ministry, there are no more than three instances recorded in which Jesus exercised the power to recall the dead to life. But the raising of the little daughter of Jairus, of the widow's only son at Nain, of the brother of Martha and Mary, provided a first witness of that supreme power of Jesus over life, of which His own Resurrection was to be the convincing proof. To-day we do not expect the same striking and arresting wonders, which were needed at the first to call men's attention to the sovereign claims of Jesus upon the faith and allegiance of men. The "works" that Jesus did were indeed witnesses for Him, which by their very grandeur and surprise won for Him an entrance into men's thoughts and compelled attention to His Person. That attention once won becomes the witness for all ages. Men are asked to rally not to His power but to His Person. The study of His Person shows that His Lordship of human life develops normally not in miracles of resurrection, but in the unbroken continuance of loving and protecting care, with which alike in life and in death He holds sway eternally over the bodies and the souls of men. Jesus knew that no instances of miraculous resurrection, however numerous and well attested, would be sufficient of themselves to win men and hold them to Himself as the living source of holiness, the fount of grace, the well-spring of eternal life. It is not by trust in His power but by union with His Person that the gifts which He came to give may be

secured. Thus we do not ask God to repeat proofs of His omnipotence by demanding fresh miracles on our behalf, but we give ourselves obediently and hopefully to that life of union with Him, which is the guarantee of eternal fellowship both between soul and soul, and between man and God.

It is in this belief in Christ as the Lord of all life that we find strength and solace, as we seek to interpret the mystery of that silence beyond the grave, which is so bewildering to love in the hour of bereavement. Death is always the supreme test of faith, for the dead have passed beyond our sight, and faith alone can follow them. It is a test that cannot be avoided or delayed. It breaks in upon the ordered amenities of life. It lays bare the hidden purpose, conscious or unconscious, which has guided our actions. It reveals what place God has taken in the realities of our daily life. If He has been the Lord of life as we faced the duties of the day, if we have known the pressure of His Will, if we have felt the peace of His Presence, if we have lived in the fellowship of His love, without question we can trust to His care beyond the veil those whom in this life we have continually committed to His loving protection.

Each life is His to order and control. The reason why we find it hard to give our loved ones unreservedly into His keeping beyond the grave, is because we have not realised His Lordship over their lives in this world. We have accepted their fellowship, we have welcomed their love, we have enjoyed their inspiration, but they have not been to us gifts from God, lives made vocal by His Spirit. We have never looked beyond them to God in all the relations of their life to us. We have

thought of them. We have thought of ourselves. We have not thought of God controlling, directing, mediating our intercourse with one another. We have thought more of our happiness than of their perfection, more of their fellowship than of God's purposes or God's claim. So when they are withdrawn beyond our sight, and the agony of silence tears at our hearts, we rebel, and having no vision of God and no faith in His sovereign love, we launch out into presumptuous commerce with the spirit-world and think we can thus re-knit our broken intercourse.

The very silence of the little daughter of Jairus might help us to a higher faith. It is enough for the father that he trusts in the Lordship of Jesus. The one mediator of fellowship between those who are living there and those who are living here is Jesus, the Lord of all life. In Him and through Him the way of true communion is open. Like the communion between ourselves and Him, it may not open the way to intimate knowledge of the conditions of that unseen life, nor may it make audible the voices of the dead, nor bring messages from them to us. When the little daughter of the ruler was restored to life, she was brought back to an intimacy of visible fellowship, which Jesus willed that she and her parents should not yet lose. The same intercourse could never be sought or resumed, when at last death came to part them. But death brings a real fellowship of spirit, in which the highest spiritual energies of the soul are employed. It is the personality at its richest and best, in its most profound and immortal faculties that enters into the secrets of this hidden communion. Even in this life sight has not carried us deepest and furthest into the lives of

others. Faith has been the surest guide. Faith has proved the closest bond. And now when sight must entirely fail, Faith enters upon a higher path and carries all the burden of fellowship. Death is the call to Faith to rally all its powers, that, transcending all its experience of earthly intercourse, it may rise to the more exacting demands which the loss of sight must make upon its powers. Faith alone may interpret for us the new mysteries of unseen fellowship. If the function of faith is thus realised, it will not be round the trivial and transient details of life's duties and interests that the energies of such an intercourse will gather. We shall seek for the sign and find the fruit of such fellowship in a quickening of all the deepest capacities of the soul, in a fine spiritual insight into the realities of the unseen, in a more steadfast realisation of those common sympathies of high spiritual endeavour, and a growing sense of that common destiny of final perfection in God, by which we shall at last attain to full and eternal fellowship. If this is true, he is best able to enter into the new fellowship which death brings, who has trained himself in this life to make Christ the medium of his deepest and truest fellowship with all those whom he loves. If Christ is made to us the Lord of all life here, then as we have accepted His ruling and guidance in the relations of earthly friendship, as He has been the source, the heart, the seal of our mutual love in this life, so will our friendships still rally round Him through the silence of death, and we shall strive to reach to those purer heights of spiritual fellowship, which are worthy of those souls now living in the fuller consciousness of His Presence and His Power.

In His Will is our peace. Love will be satisfied with what He gives.

A Prayer for Fellowship.

Lord Jesu, King of Paradise, Who holdest all souls in life and in death, grant that in this life we may so love our friends in Thee, that in Thee and through Thee we may still find our fellowship with them when Thou hast called them into Thy nearer Presence, for Thy mercy's sake, Who art One with the Father and the Holy Ghost in the fellowship of eternal love.

C

"The maid is not dead, but sleepeth." Christ can speak of life where man can only see death. We need the divine vision of Christ, as we face the great problems of to-day. It is easy to speak in glowing terms of the great qualities of our race. The achievements of our country, whether in peace or war, deserve high praise. In art, in industry, in science, signs of progress encourage us with the hope of ever-increasing success. But thoughtful observers of national life are alert to the grave dangers which continue to threaten the stability of our country and our Empire. Shameless pursuit of wealth, callous disregard of responsibility, indolent acquiescence in idle luxury, ruthless competition, class hatred sedulously cultivated, impatience of moral restraint, selfish love of comfort, studied avoidance of pain and effort, absence of spiritual motive,—these are factors of the daily struggle which may not be ignored. Not even the world-agony of war has purged us of these evils. When the proud boasts and promises of the platform have died away, and the

eager reformer turns to meet the issues of actual life, these are the triumphant forces of opposition, which bring his schemes to nought. Only One can say that within this cold, breathless frame there stirs the hope of life. Christ alone can bring life to this body of death. No power is strong enough to check the ingrained selfishness of human instincts but the power of Christian faith. There is no enlightenment for the darkened spirit but the light of Christ. There is no motive which can unlock the generous sympathies of the soul, and consecrate all its energies in selfless devotion to the highest service of others, but the love of Christ. If there is to be a recalling of the spirit of life into the body of the nation, it will not be at the bidding of physical science, nor of quickened industries, nor of statecraft however subtle. Life, abiding, abounding and triumphant is the sole gift of Jesus Christ, the Lord of all life. The Spirit of Christ must inspire the soul of the nation.

How shall this be? Undoubtedly this is the mission of the Church. The hope of the Christian must leap to the splendour of the opportunity offered to his faith. But when he descends from the mount of vision to deal with the realities of his vocation, he stands bewildered at the helplessness of the Church. The Faith once delivered to the saints,—where shall he find that Faith in the fullness of its divine utterance flung out with its great challenge to the world by the unanimous and consentient voice of Christian teaching? That glad acceptance of a Virgin-born Redeemer, Son of Mary, Son of God, that assurance of the bodily resurrection of the triumphant Lord, that humbling sense of personal guilt, that devotion to the Christian

sacrifice of the Altar,—where in the Church itself to-day is the consistent, harmonious witness to these characteristic marks of Catholic life? Schisms, divisions, heresies have broken in upon the cherished hope of unity. The Church, which should be the source and symbol of unity, has become a by-word for the spirit of faction and party strife. A maimed and ineffective witness to righteousness, lack of evangelistic zeal, faintheartedness in faith and work, waning devotion to the primary duty of the conversion of souls,—such to the anxious eye are the marks of death in the very Body of Christ. And some would say, "She is dead, trouble not the Master." But again the voice of Christ is heard, "She is not dead, but sleepeth." It is Christ Who will bring life. It must be ours to "trouble the Master." Though others laugh Him to scorn, He will hold on His way at our bidding, and raise His Church to life. No political activity, no new machinery, however perfect, no autonomy, no liberty from state control, will bring life. Christ must enter into our hearts in the power of His life-giving Presence. We must "trouble" Him more earnestly. We must seek Him anew. We must expect greater things of Him, and surrender ourselves in deeper conviction of faith to His obedience. Amongst all the restraints and hindrances of our present anomalous position there is nothing to restrict our fullest approach to Christ in sacramental union. "Back to Christ" must indeed be the cry which carries us away from all dependence upon emotional satisfaction or upon perfection of administrative reform, and settles us first upon the sure foundation of sacramental fellowship with Christ. Grace is the one thing needed. Churchmen must live up to their

birthright and claim their privileges as "partakers of the Divine nature." At the Altar we must let Christ remake our lives, and, remaking them, renew His Church with power to kindle the soul of the nation through the effective witness of lives made righteous by His grace, and illumined with His truth. The Church, with all its manifest infirmities and faults, bears no aspect of death for those who will fix their gaze and stay their hearts upon Jesus, the Lord of all life.

There is another sphere yet into which men gaze wonderingly to-day, where Christ alone can bring life and hope. It is not enough that one nation be inspired with ideals of righteousness and peace. That will not suffice to secure the tranquillity of the world. All nations must be bound together in a league of amity and peace, which shall banish strife and kill the spirit of aggression and the lust of power. This is the common ideal, to which four years of unparalleled moral horror and suffering have raised the hopes and stirred the wills of all nations. Yet when the facts of the situation are faced, and the actualities of national life are realised, who is there so bold that he does not draw back at the menace of the combined forces of evil that lie in wait to make vain the glorious hope of universal peace? There are the technical difficulties of devising terms of corporate association, which shall be fair to each while it gives freedom of development to all. That is the statesmen's task, and they have not shrunk from it. But that is not where the greatest danger lies. The problem lies deeper still. How shall old national rivalries be stilled? How shall the spirit of brotherhood be realised in such a perfect way that

all national differences shall be transcended? How shall such mutual trust be created that all the hostility bred of long years of prejudice and suspicion may be overcome? How shall there be developed among the nations a zealous desire for mutual service, by which the gifts of each may be made to minister to the needs of all? How can the right limits of national development be fixed in such a way that, while each nation uses to the full its opportunities of self-expression and self-enrichment, there shall be no encroachment, no aggression, no tyranny, which shall challenge or defeat the rights of others? These are moral, not political problems. They need for their solution a controlling influence, a compelling inspiration, which shall be able to change the natural current of men's selfish desires and check their native passions. The heroic virtues of self-sacrifice, chivalry, and courage, developed in the struggle to save liberty and life for the world, are not so easily maintained when, in the pursuits of peace, that life is not felt to be in danger. The closest observers, looking steadily at the world as it begins to loose itself from the harness of war, see none of the old perils really past. The conflict may change its form, but the instinct for pre-eminence, the lust for power, the quest of wealth, the will to rule—these all survive in the heart of every race, and threaten the peaceful ideals of a League of Nations.

Can any power avail to avert defeat and death? There is but one sure hope. Christ alone can change the heart of nations and hold them firmly to the path of peace. There is no stable brotherhood strong and passionate enough to bind together men of every

nation in a common endeavour of righteousness, liberty, and peace but the brotherhood which is based upon our common sonship of God in Christ. No other ties, whether of expediency, interest, or high moral purpose, will be strong enough to resist the strain of those selfish motives which are always at work to set the nations at variance and to keep them apart. It can only be as the Kingdom of God takes shape in the life of each nation, inspiring its ideals, keeping the way of righteousness, creating fellowship and love, that any guarantee can be found for the permanence of peace. Dead indeed is the hope of any international league, if we depend solely upon the wisdom or power of any human schemes to control the passions and guide the destinies of the nations. But if, in view of this certain death, we "trouble the Master," and call Him to our aid, then we can brave the ridicule of those dirge-singers, who would laugh us to scorn, and Christ shall restore Peace to the world He has come to save.

The little child of Jairus has infinite worth in the eyes of her Maker and Redeemer. So has each one of us to-day. Each has his part to play. Neither Church nor nation can find new strength unless it come through the re-consecration of each individual life. I have no right to speak of the failure of Church or nation as long as I myself am wanting in dedication and service. Let me first feel the life-giving power of Christ in my own heart; let Him take my life and make it His own; let Him raise me from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness, and then I shall understand how that converting power, repeated in millions of individual souls, can bring new and risen

life to a dying world, and win the promised Kingdom for our Lord.

A Prayer for True Service.

Remember, O Lord, what Thou has wrought in us, and not what we deserve, and as Thou hast called us to Thy service, make us worthy of Thy calling, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

VI

PARABLES

St. Matthew xiii. 1–52; St. Mark iv. 1–34; St. Luke viii. 4–18.

How wonderfully Jesus was able to accommodate His teaching to the powers of His hearers. The words which He spoke were indeed the very words of God. The Galilean crowds who thronged Him on the hillside or by the lake were face to face with One in Whom were hid all the treasures of wisdom. The inmost counsels of God, the deepest secrets of Divine truth, stood unveiled before Him. He had that absolute knowledge of God which belonged to the Divine Son. He had come to reveal the Father. Yet there was an economy which He must exercise in the work of revelation. The hearts of those to whom He spoke had been long closed to the message of God. There had been no habit of open vision, no expectancy of Divine revelation, no training in spiritual things. There was no living interest in the things of eternity, no teaching of religion which had evoked any response of faith and love. There had been no lack of religious formulæ and phrases of customary piety and formal worship. The outward habits of religious life had preserved these intact. But they had been spoiled and robbed of reality and power by frequent repetition and

unthinking lip-service. A new way must be found by which new truth might find an entrance into hearts so hardened to the voice of revelation. Jesus found that way in the parables, which in a very special degree marked the ministry of the Galilean Days. "Without a parable spake He not unto them."

It was not in the parables that Jesus taught the deepest truths which He had come to reveal. They formed a preparatory stage in His teaching. They were specially suited to His initial work in Galilee. In them were enshrined the great fundamental truths of the Love and Providence of God. Belief in these attributes of God must be ensured before the greater mysteries of the Divine Incarnation can be revealed. Jesus knew what was in man. He could teach as men were able to receive. True it was that to the height even of this first teaching few of His Galilean hearers ever reached. That was the measure of their condemnation. The lessons were not beyond their understanding, but they refused any effort of apprehension. In the dispensation of truth, even as of grace, there must be co-operation on man's part with the gift of God. The parables of Jesus are the divine witness to the simplicity of God's revelation and the necessity of man's response.

A

Parables were not a novel method of teaching. The writings of the Prophets had made them known to the Jews, and the Rabbis in their oral teaching had made frequent use of that form of illustration. But in effect they were new on the lips of Jesus, because of the intense actuality of the scenes which He described.

Jesus gathered up into His pictures the simple realities of daily life. His parables were not laboured rhetorical devices, nor fanciful efforts of imagination. As striking illustrations of great spiritual truths they were just transcripts from life. They were facts of daily life held up to the mirror of truth. In them Jesus arrested men's attention by bringing them face to face with the supreme reality of the life in which they were engaged. In them Jesus sought to release men from the deadening apathy in which the listless routine of daily life had wrapped their hearts. It was not an escape from the facts of life which the world needed, but a deeper appreciation of their eternal significance.

Viewed in this light, the parables suggest a characteristic feature of Christ's teaching. He came to invest human life with that reality which belongs to it as the sphere of God's loving care and perpetual presence. To no other great teacher did life present such a glorious field of universal opportunity. All the tendencies of Eastern thought had leaned towards a disregard of the material facts of life. Life had been treated as a dream, an illusion. Reality was denied to the things of sense in such a way that the highest good was to be found in complete abstraction from the ordinary duties and responsibilities of active life. The individual was lost in the life of the Absolute. The conception of human personality was vague and ineffective. Man entered most closely into union with God by a process of gradual separation from all human intercourse, by increasing absorption in the contemplation of God. In direct contrast to this, Jesus glorified the actual duties of life. The simple routine of daily activities, the common relationships of home and trade

and work were the very sphere of man's co-operation with God. Here God was discovered, and here man's dignity was revealed. In the midst of these duties man came daily face to face with God.

Not only Eastern thought, but Greek philosophy and Roman stoicism alike sought ways of escape from the monotony of daily duty and the hard facts of human existence. Neither Greek nor Roman could find pleasure in the realities of daily life. It is true that the Jewish mind had shown a consistent aversion from abstract thought, and the character of the Jew had been fashioned by a long devotion to scrupulous obedience in the practical duties of life. They were in the main a matter-of-fact, unimaginative people. But the very efforts which they made to preserve a faultless observance of ceremonial duty in the minor details of daily work had robbed life of all its spontaneity and spiritual significance. Formalism had blinded their eyes to the vision of God in simple things. It was the purpose of Jesus to unveil the hidden beauty of life, and to disclose the Presence of God in the commonplaces of daily duty. He chose, therefore, the scenes which were most habitual and most familiar as the fitting illustrations of His teaching.

As we read the parables to-day, the simple details of Jewish life lie unfolded before us. No duty is too common or too trivial to find a place in the pictures so vividly sketched by One Who for thirty years had identified Himself with all the simplicities of a village home. We see the poor clothes being patched till they are too threadbare to mend again. There is the busy mother watching eagerly for the dough to rise in the pan. There is the room being swept and the

candle set in its place. The games of the children in the market-place, the dogs and the beggars of the bazaar, the wedding party with its glamour of lights passing through the dark streets, the debtor haled off to prison, the merchants chattering at their stalls—what vivid pictures they present of the most familiar scenes of everyday town life. With equal readiness and truth Jesus uses the life of nature in the fields. The sower casting his seed with lavish hand as he strides along the furrows, the sure unheeded growth of the hidden seed, the brown earth slowly greening with the tender blade, the tall weeds growing rank amongst the precious corn, the golden glory of the harvest falling to the sickle of the reapers—thus the simple pageant of the changing year yields its constant lessons of the providence of God.

So Christ would have us know that the importance of life lies in the simple round of most familiar scenes and daily duties. Here is the vision of God. Here is the voice of revelation. This is the open road to God which we disdain to tread. It is as we react to the constant influence of the repeated routine of life that character is shaped. There is a significance in the familiar surroundings of every life, which is easily missed. It is difficult to see wholly and clearly that which lies closest to us. Our eyes are trained upon the far distances. We look up and away, we look behind and before. We do not look within. We do not look steadfastly at the present. The past and the future make a more attractive appeal. But God would bind us to the realities of the present, simple though they be. Here we must find God. If we cannot find Him here, there is no promise of any easier quest

elsewhere. The saintly life is the life in which nothing is mean, nothing is trivial, in which the smallest things are touched into glory by the sense of the Presence of God.

It is this transfiguration of common things which the parables emphasise. It is not only that each detail, however simple and familiar, carries its own lesson and illustrates great principles of divine action, which affect our spiritual life. But a new dignity attaches to these simple duties, because they have been commended to us by the experience and approval of Christ Himself. It is a wonderful thing to contemplate that the very Son of God, the appointed heir of all things, the effulgence of the Divine glory, the very image of the Divine substance, upholding all things by the word of His power, should yet stoop in the sublime work of redemption to fix His gaze, and bestow His approval upon these simple duties of daily life and duty.

It was not enough for Christ to give to the small things of life the quiet benediction of His own painstaking and dutiful experience in the home at Nazareth, but He exalted them to fresh significance, as He made them the themes of His own public teaching. Jesus not only cared for these things, but He wished us to know that He cared. He wished us to realise their dignity and to know their importance. He wished us to know that in all the manifold round of petty duties, which make so large a demand upon our time, there is always the sympathy of God and the constant fellowship of the Spirit to ennoble, to hearten and to support.

The dignity of the trivial round and common task

lies in the fact that it is duty, the necessary routine which we cannot escape without being unfaithful to our responsibilities. It is for us the way of obedience, and obedience is always the way of vision. "The best things that I know," said St. Teresa, "came to me by obedience and not by revelation." Our duties bring us into the Presence of God. They come to us from His hand. They become the mirror of His perfections. The dullest mechanical toil may be the spring of perpetual renewal to the soul that can see God. St. Catherine of Siena was able to bind herself to a faithful performance of her duties in a harsh and unsympathetic household by the steadfast resolve that in her parents and brothers and sisters, she would see God the Father, Christ and His Apostles, so that in all the hardships of her service she was consciously ministering to God and His Saints. Thus all her work was transfigured and her happiness was undimmed.

It is possible for a life to be spent in little tasks that are not duties, tasks which through want of purpose and weakness of method have been allowed to usurp the place of greater things. Such tasks have nothing to redeem them from triviality. They are the refuge of little minds. They do not make for vision, they bring no revelation. If they have any motive, it is a motive in which the sense of vocation has no part. It is not the little thing in itself, but the little thing as a duty set by God, which carries with it the vision of spiritual things, and lifts the dull task above the levels of monotonous routine to the heights of joyous service. It is more than a way of happy service, it becomes a way of communion, for, says St. Vincent de Paul,

"God is a perpetual communion to the soul that does His Will."

We may find, therefore, in the parables of Christ a fresh call to a more direct recognition of God in the common tasks of life. If we are not sanctified in them, we have missed the secret of holiness. It is not in our moments of prayer, but in our hours of work that we must prove our communion with God.

A Worker's Prayer.

Blessed Lord, Who by the example of Thy work at Nazareth hast sanctified the simple duties of daily toil, and by Thy teaching hast revealed the sympathy of God in all our common tasks, grant that in the midst of work we may find rest and peace in Thy Presence, and may take joy in all that ministers to Thy service, Who art ever our Refuge, our Strength and our exceeding great Reward.

B

The parables as a whole appeal to us to-day as a very natural and a very easy method of teaching. But it was otherwise with those to whom they were first spoken. To the disciples even they were difficult to understand. "When He was alone, they that were with Him with the twelve asked of Him the parable." Jesus knew that only a few of His hearers would understand. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." There was a deliberate purpose in the difficulty of the parables, which Jesus declared to His disciples in these words, "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God. But unto them that are without all these things are done in parables, that seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand, lest at any time they should be converted and their sins should be

forgiven them." If this was a difficult saying to the disciples, it seems hardly less difficult to us. What was this purpose of intellectual and spiritual sifting which the parables served?

It is true that the parables of Jesus were spoken to a larger audience than those who actually heard them. They carried lessons for those who were yet unborn. But their immediate application was directly to those who listened to Him in Galilee and Judæa. It was the condition of their spiritual thought and the standpoint of their religious outlook, which determined the form of Christ's teaching. The parables of Jesus are His appeal to "them that are without." They are not the vehicles of His deepest teaching, even when they are fully understood. Their purpose is to arrest attention, to arouse thought, to excite interest. They attract notice to truths already known, but long neglected. They set familiar things in new surroundings, flashing upon the obscurity of dull routine the penetrating light of the Presence of God. It was a characteristic feature of the Incarnation that the coming of Jesus had not disturbed the routine of life either in home or in nation. He had adapted Himself to the normal limitations of human life. No outward splendour had marked His upbringing, no external glory had revealed the Incarnate Presence of God. How then in the midst of surroundings externally so normal were men to be made aware of that divine event, which in abiding reality was so abnormal? Men would never be able to realise a Divine Incarnation, which did not entirely change the external aspect of life, unless they were able to recognise the Presence of God in the normal events and simple duties of

their daily surroundings. The parables dealt with simple things because the way of the Incarnation was the way of homely duty, lowly obscurity and patient obedience. Unless human life in its ordinary phases and its familiar limitations could be deemed worthy and capable of being the scene of God's special revelation, then no place could be found for the unique fact of the Incarnation. It was not the purpose of the parables to proclaim the new revelation of God in the earthly home-coming of His dear Son, but they were designed to prepare the way for belief in the Incarnation by bringing men to realise the divine worth of human life and the nearness of God to man. The first message of Jesus, therefore, was not a revelation of Himself and of His Incarnation, but a new manifestation of God the Father, a republication of the great truths which prophets and teachers of old had already taught of the Presence and the Providence of God. Men could not believe in Jesus until they believed in the Father. Jesus would draw men to a firm belief in Himself, not by the direct assertion of His Godhead, not by the startling use of divine powers of miracle, but by a steadfast appeal to their awakened spiritual sense. To arouse the first efforts of this spiritual sense was the work of the parables.

True to His mission of revealing the Father, Jesus began the presentation of His message with teaching by parable. He used this method conspicuously in His first year of Galilean work, and He resorted to it again in His final appeal to the Jews of Jerusalem. Amongst the Galileans the work of the parables was to test the earnestness and provoke the religious capacity of His hearers. There were many to whom the parables

were no more than an open picture of familiar things, a picture drawn with graphic skill, revealing new beauties at every turn, but with no message beyond their beauty. They were aware of no spiritual revelation. There was to them no hidden secret which needed diligence and faith to discover. The picture would remain firmly fixed in their memory, because of its lucid charm and haunting beauty. And perhaps in the long years to come some teacher of the Gospel would wonder at the ready response with which such hearts as these might welcome the story of the Incarnate Christ. The seed had borne no fruit for the great Sower Himself to reap, but yet the seed which He had scattered in those Galilean Days might not have been wasted. What He had sown the Holy Spirit had tended, and the harvest had not altogether failed. But at the moment when Jesus was actually speaking, His parables were sifting His hearers, and to those in whom they awakened no spiritual effort of response there was no fuller teaching given. They were incapable yet of any manifestation of God. Pearls should not be cast before swine. Men judged themselves at once by their attitude to the parables. They saw, indeed, but they did not perceive, they heard but they did not understand, nor could they turn and be converted.

But there were others who "had ears to hear." For them the parables became a challenge. They could not be satisfied merely with their literary beauty or artistic charm. They had power to penetrate beneath the surface, they could recognise their deeper meaning, they felt them to be an appeal to a spiritual decision. Though nothing could be less personal in

form than the parables of Jesus, yet they were found to invite a decision as to His Person. They displayed a knowledge, they revealed a vision, they carried an authority, which made a new demand upon men's faith. They are seen to assert a claim of God upon man's obedience, an ideal of human character, a revelation of the nature of God and a prophecy of the sovereignty of God achieved over human life, which could only come with such fullness and certainty from the lips of One Who was more than man. It was to this decision that at length the guidance of the Holy Spirit was to lead those " who had ears to hear."

Those clear figures and beautiful images of the parables, stored so easily in the memory, grew in suggestiveness and meaning with the learner's growth. At first they quickened interest in the realities of daily life, they made attractive the great virtues of compassion, integrity, faithfulness, prudence and humility. The Parables of the Good Samaritan, the Pharisee and Publican, the Unjust Steward, the Unmerciful Servant, and the Rich Fool could not fail to carry home such primary lessons of moral duty. Then in such parables as the Labourers in the Vineyard, the Talents, the Pounds and the Barren Fig-tree men learnt the fundamental claim of God upon human life, and realised the fullness of their responsibility to God their Creator. God Himself was revealed in the beauty of His moral perfection in the Parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Money and the Prodigal Son. These parables revealed the love of God for man. And then the means by which the Divine Love drew men out of their weakness and sin into fellowship with Himself was suggested in the Parables of the Kingdom.

It was only suggested, it was not described. For the parables themselves were not the Gospel. They were only the preliminaries of the Gospel. The good news of the Gospel was the Incarnation of the Son of God, with the Atoning Death, the glorious Resurrection, the mighty Ascension and the outpouring of the Spirit, which carried God's loving work to its completion. This it was not the purpose of the parables to describe, but all that the parables reveal of the character of God and of His relation to human life creates an expectation and a hope which the truth of the Incarnation alone is found to satisfy and fulfil. Those "who had ears to hear" were thus prepared by the teaching of Christ Himself for that fuller understanding of His Person and His Work, which it was the mission of the Spirit to bestow. That truth once understood reveals in turn new beauty and new depth in the familiar imagery of the parables. The nearness of God has become immeasurably closer to human life, and God incarnate has enriched with new beauty, and touched with new power, every intimate duty and every familiar scene, which the parables of Christ have so wondrously hallowed and made glorious.

It is for us to remember this economy in divine teaching, which Christ has illustrated in His use of parables. Christ, it is true, has fulfilled His promise to His disciples, "The hour cometh when I shall no more speak unto you in parables, but shall tell you plainly of the Father." The fuller revelation of the Spirit is ours to-day. Yet God still leads us gently on step by step from truth to truth, graduating His lessons to our several capacities and our effort of response. We must not despise the first lessons of God, by which

the scenes of daily life become instinct with His Presence, and are made vehicles of His teaching. As we are true to these first lessons of moral rectitude, reverence and responsibility, as we bend our ears to catch the whisper of God amid the whirr and hum of daily toil, as we hold our minds alert to discover the ways of God in human life, so we shall be prepared for the fullness of that truth which is revealed in the Incarnation. It is a great and happy thing, if from the beginning the soul can unfold itself without difficulty or doubt in the growing knowledge of the Incarnate Christ, and in the life-giving fellowship of His Church. But there must be many for whom this can be only the end attained after long struggle. We must not be impatient, either for ourselves or for others. For some, the whole of this life may hardly suffice for the lessons of the parables. Yet if they "have ears to hear," who can doubt that they will one day be allowed to see the King in His Beauty, and find their long-sought happiness in the worship of the Incarnate Lord?

A Prayer for Faithfulness to Truth.

God, Whose word giveth light and understanding unto the simple, open our hearts and minds to seek Thy Will, shed forth upon us the bright beams of Thy Truth, and grant that as we walk in the light we may come to the full knowledge of Thee, our Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier, our Life, our Peace, and our eternal Joy.

C

"He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." The Parable of the Sower, which in all the Gospels is the first to be recorded, seems to illustrate the principle of teaching by parable. The Word of God falls

on hearts very variously prepared for its reception. Its fruitfulness varies with the response of the soil. Only in the "good ground" of an "honest and good heart" is the fruit brought patiently to perfection. We must use our own best efforts of thought and study to welcome the revelation of God's truth. The truest lessons of the parables will not be found on the surface. Jesus has given us a key to the method of their interpretation in His explanation of the Parables of the Sower and the Tares. All parables will not offer the same rich analogy in every detail which these two parables suggest. Often the details may be unimportant, and the whole lesson lie in one great truth, as in the Unjust Steward. But whether the details have importance or not, each parable will only yield its growing revelation of truth to those who will meditate upon it with all their powers of reverent thought, with prayer and with the conscious guidance of the Holy Spirit.

"Nothing is hid, that shall not be made manifest, nor anything secret that shall not be known and come to light. Take heed therefore how ye hear, for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he thinketh he hath." We do not take heed how we hear. The neglect of this warning of our Lord is conspicuous in our relation to all that we hear, in our general mental attitude to all that we read, in our refusal to set any control upon our thoughts. It is no wonder, then, that we find it difficult to enforce discipline upon our thoughts when we come to the study of Divine truth. The study of the parables, Christ says, demand such a discipline, if we are to possess ourselves of their secret.

Perhaps we seldom realise the influence of thought upon life. We allow the importance of the intellectual life in the case of those who are specially endowed with gifts of mind, the men of science and genius. But in the case of our own mediocrity we are apt to forget the necessity for the right guidance of our thoughts. What we are in our inmost thoughts, that we truly are. The soul is dyed the colour of its thoughts. There it is that our deepest motives are realised. Thought lies behind all our conscious activity. There can be no real doubt as to the ultimate purpose of all thought. God Himself is the end of all human contemplation and knowledge. He alone can satisfy at last all the ambitions of the intellect, all the aspirations of human understanding. The guidance of the human mind along these lines of fullest and truest development is the continual work of the Holy Spirit, Who is the Spirit of Truth, the Fount of eternal wisdom. All true thought must be in some way an unveiling of God. There is real and profound reason for magnifying the dignity of thought, even for the life of the simplest. As St. Cyril has said, "Man, little as he is, in the Spirit sees the beginning and the end of the world. He knows what he has never learnt, for the true Illuminator is within him." The knowledge of the simplest Christian, who is true to the gift of the indwelling Spirit, touches profounder depths than those of which we are conscious. The right guidance of this great gift of thought must be of paramount importance.

Yet there is scarcely any part of our life where we are so heedless of the need of discipline. In the case of our thoughts we are so unjustifiably lax with ourselves. Modern education hardly teaches us how to

think. Men will not recognise that there are rules of just thinking, that there is a legitimate and an illegitimate use of reason. Scupoli pointed to a frequent fault, when he demanded that the understanding should be freed from the overmastering influence of the affections and desires. Our thoughts can only be free when they are determined by the true self, that is the self which is in balanced possession of all its faculties of mind and heart and will. Now for the true development of each individual life, we must look to the Holy Ghost. If the faculty with which we think is to be freed from thraldom and to find right guidance, it must be quickened with the vital power of the Holy Spirit. We must believe sincerely that the true originality, the individual and particular aptitude, of each mind can only be fully developed by the energy of the indwelling Spirit. It is this sense of active, insistent and native originality, which is mostly lacking in our conception of the life of thought.

The prevailing influences at work in modern life are for the most part hostile to the proper guidance and training of the mind. The tendency of the day to emphasise the mere amassing of facts of knowledge obscures the faculty of thought itself. The mind is receptive rather than constructive. It passively accepts impressions in a spirit of lazy indifference. There is no purpose, no choice, no sifting, no discrimination. There is no energy of original, creative thought. The consequences of this general tendency are seen in growing inability to concentrate thought, indifference to the care of the intellect, neglect of the control of the imagination, paralysis of the energies of thought, and ignorance of the profound influence of

the mind upon the issues of life. The thoughts which men tolerate in their minds are not those of their own choice. They have come in of themselves and have occupied waste ground to no good purpose. There is an aimless curiosity, an easy readiness to accept every impression that comes, a growing habit of day-dreaming. In ways like these most of us can recognise a want of disciplined thought, which reveals itself seriously in a painful spirit of uncontrollable distraction when we come to direct our minds upon God in meditation and prayer. No difficulty presses so hardly upon the earnest Christian as the difficulty of distraction at times of devotion. Just when the mind wants most to be concentrated, there comes the severest trial of distraction.

If we ask why this experience is so common, and so constant with us, it is probably safe to say that we have not gone deep enough down to find the power of control. It is true that much may be done by purely intellectual methods to train the mind to correctness, attention and concentration. But more powerful still may be the habits of spiritual devotion which are based upon the recognition of the directing power of the indwelling Spirit. Meditation is one of these habits of the spiritual life, which places the life of thought immediately under the control and discipline of the Holy Spirit. And the parables, with their wealth of imagery and their "mysteries of the Kingdom," offer perhaps the best subject matter for a new beginning of meditation. It is by meditation that we take heed how we hear. The parables give us pictures easy enough for us to reconstruct, so that our imagination may have their part to play, while they

are kept within certain bounds by the words of Christ Himself, and at the same time there is ample food for reflection and ground for original thought in the discovery of the deeper meaning of His teaching, and in the application of Christ's message to the actual conditions of our own life. It is here that the parables have a peculiarly practical value, for they bring the Presence of Jesus so very close to the details of life, as we ourselves know it.

The secret of such meditation is to have sufficient trust in the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We do not allow for the individual originality of vision which God is ready to give, if we will steadily make our own effort to realise what He reveals. No doubt there is the passive aspect of meditation. We have to wait upon God, to be still that He may speak, to listen for His Voice. But the active side is equally important. It is there that we often fail. We need to direct our thoughts deliberately and patiently along the lines of the revelation which these words of Christ suggest. This parable which lies before us as the chosen subject of our meditation is meant to rouse the energies of the mind to new contemplation, to give a new vision of God, to bring home in new and vital ways the reality of His Being, and the immediate nearness of His Presence in our life to-day. We must bend all our powers of concentration to keep the soul brooding upon the one definite truth which the incidents of the parable suggest. It has a real application to our daily life, and we must find it. It touches our life closely to-day, but it needs attention and the dedication of our powers of thought, and the faithful questioning of our own experience to find the truth to which God points

us. We must believe indeed that the Holy Spirit, Whose aid we have asked, can surely quicken our attention and guide our hearts aright to God's message for the work of to-day. He will keep our thoughts from straying down the easiest paths of spiritual distraction. He will hold the truth before us till its message is burnt into our souls. Dim indeed may seem our vision. Still it is vision and it is ours. That is what the Spirit secures for us. If we will keep it before our minds through the work of the day, it will grow clearer as the light of duty shines upon it. What has seemed at first mere abstract, academic truth, becomes vital, real, pulsing with actuality and life, as each new experience of the day unfolds the manifold wealth and richness of its meaning. So it is that the great lessons of Christ are worked into the fabric of our life. The mind of Christ becomes the standard and rule of our working life. To one who meditates, God Himself is mirrored in every action of the day. The simplest duties are done perfectly, because they are done under the impulse of the truest dedication, and in the consciousness of His sustaining Presence.

To such a habit of meditation the beauty of the parables may invite us. They are surely the words of the Redeemer. No one has sought to rival His supremacy there. Neither apocryphal gospel nor apostolic epistle has any parable to offer. But it must be a steady discipline, a patient progress. Assuredly it will be thus by spiritual, rather than by purely intellectual methods that the most abiding results will be attained. Jesus has worn the Crown of Thorns to expiate all the sins of the human intellect. In the perfection of His conquering humanity He

wears the Crown of Glory, that He may impart to us to-day the power of conquest, which His obedience and self-control have won. Let us lift up our hearts, and out of the midst of our failures claim the promise of His victory, that with all our minds we may love Him, and casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, may bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

A Prayer before Meditation.

O Holy Spirit, Lord of Life and Fount of Truth, Who showest us the things of Jesus, by Whom the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, quicken our wills and enlighten our minds, that we may see the wondrous things of Thy law, and grant that as we meditate on Thy holy Word we may so love that which Thou hast revealed, that we may be more and more conformed to that which Thou dost will, Who, in the unity of the Father and of His Son Jesus Christ ever livest and reignest, one God, world without end.

VII

THE CRISIS

St. Matthew xiv. 13–21; St. Mark vi. 30–44; St. Luke ix. 10–17; St. John vi. 1–15.

The story of the Galilean Days receives very little attention in the Gospel of St. John, doubtless because the chief incidents had already been amply recorded in the Synoptic Gospels before the fourth Gospel was written. But the notable miracle of the Feeding of the Five Thousand would naturally appeal to the writer of the Gospel which St. Clement has rightly called "spiritual." It was the crisis in Christ's Galilean ministry. The public effort which it inspired, to take Jesus by force and make Him king, was the final proof that the spiritual claims of Christ could not be understood by the people of Galilee. This movement of mistaken ambition was the sign that they had rejected His Messianic appeal. This in itself would have special interest for the evangelist, who was relating how through the same misunderstanding of the nature of His kingship Jesus had been rejected by the people of Jerusalem. This miracle, moreover, formed the background to the supreme teaching of Christ on the Living Bread. Among the few "signs," therefore, which the fourth Gospel records, this miracle of the Feeding of the Five Thousand naturally finds a

place,—the only miracle of Christ recorded by all the evangelists. Whether we look at it as a critical moment in the life of Jesus, or as a crowning evidence of His miraculous power, or as a significant symbol of the deepest spiritual teaching, the Feeding of the Five Thousand in the wilderness has an importance which cannot be overlooked.

A

The spring of the second year of our Lord's ministry had clothed the Galilean hills with verdure. The sower had finished his work in the fields and had committed his seed to the fruitful earth in the hope of a plenteous harvest. And now the festival season of the Passover was at hand, and the thoughts of all were turning towards Jerusalem, as they made up their companies for the annual pilgrimage to the Holy City. Jesus had determined to spend this Passover in the quiet of retreat, not wishing to make any public appearance at the feast. As the people of Galilee began to make their preparations for the journey, Jesus took the opportunity of leaving the life of the crowded city, and crossed the lake, seeking solitude and rest with His disciples in the wilderness country on the eastern shore. At once He was missed. At such a time, when the minds of the people were stirred with those hopes of religious and national freedom, which the festival aroused, their thoughts turned swiftly to the Prophet in their midst Whose words and deeds had given such promise of deliverance. It seemed the very moment when He must have some sure word of guidance to give, some great

plan of conquest to unfold. His departure was known at once. It served only to increase their resolve to find Him. The crowds took their way together round the lake and found Him in His solitude on the other side.

Jesus had no wish to deny Himself to those who sought Him. He was eager to use every opportunity which His Father set before Him. Never had teacher such an expectant hearing. Never had audience so wonderful and so inspiring a teacher. The words of Jesus we are not told. But knowing the conditions of the time and the feelings of the people, we can reverently imagine how Jesus would use the great themes of deliverance and redemption to point the way to that glorious freedom from the toils of sin and death which it was the work of the Messiah to accomplish. The people gave themselves up to the spell of His teaching. For three days they thronged Him, till their very provisions were spent and hunger broke out amongst them. Now at last the disciples thought that the people must go away. It had indeed seemed strange to the Twelve that the Master had not sent the crowds away at the beginning, and secured for Himself and His disciples that leisure which He had promised.

But Jesus had no such intention. And now His compassion was stirred by their hunger. They could not be sent away fasting. There in the wilderness He would feed them with His own creative Hand. There was no other way. Philip recognised that even if it were possible to find bazaars in the wilderness, where bread could be bought, the cost of providing food for five thousand would be beyond their slender means.

Was there really nothing at all that could be found? Andrew brought forward a lad with five barley loaves and a few small fishes. This was all that was left to the whole company. Jesus received the gift and bade the disciples arrange the wondering people in ordered companies upon the grass. Then taking the bread into His Hands He gave thanks, and with His word multiplied the loaves as He handed the bread to the disciples to distribute to the hungry people in their rows. And when the needs of all were satisfied there was yet a basketful of fragments for each of the disciples to gather at the Master's unexpected bidding, "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost."

Such a miracle was all that was needed to bring the enthusiasm of the people to a climax of devotion and expectancy. Jesus must be indeed that prophet foretold of God, that herald of the Messianic times, for whom the nation was waiting. He had spoken the word of God. He had revealed the power of God. He must be their king. They would take Him in triumph to the Holy City, and the Feast of the Passover should become indeed the Feast of the nation's deliverance. Once more Satan presented to Jesus the temptation of an earthly crown. The disciples were moved with the enthusiasm of the people. It was one of those moments when Jesus revealed His supreme mastery of men. "And straightway Jesus constrained His disciples to get into a ship and to go before Him unto the other side, while He sent the multitudes away." The event proved a crisis in the work of Jesus. The miracle had revealed the deep current of popular feeling, set irrevocably in the direction of a Messianic

movement of earthly sovereignty and freedom, which Jesus was to be called to lead. Henceforth there could be no public ministry in the cities of Galilee. The appeal of Christ to the people had failed. He had come to reveal the Father, to disclose God, to inaugurate a new kingdom of spiritual power. The Galileans could see no further than their own immediate material needs. They were quite blind to the spiritual claims of Jesus. It must have been a bewildering moment for the people of Galilee and a day of great disappointment for Jesus, when He found Himself forced to refuse the welcome of those Galilean Days. From this time Christ would devote Himself to the training of His disciples apart from the distraction of mistaken popular enthusiasm.

But before this retirement Jesus made one last supreme appeal, based upon the facts of this great miracle. The next day He proclaimed Himself to them as the Living Bread which came down from heaven, and in the synagogue at Capernaum which had been the scene of His miraculous healing He declared the divine character of His mission in the words, "He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood dwelleth in Me and I in him." It was the parting of the ways. Many even of His disciples "when they heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?" and "upon this many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him."

An Act of Praise.

Eternal and loving Saviour, Who by Thy Holy Incarnation hast enriched our human nature, and by the miracles of Thy Grace dost renew to us daily the witness of Thy power, praise be to Thee for Thy abounding mercy and Thy constant aid. For

the revelation of the Father, the gift of the Holy Ghost and the redemption which Thou hast won for us upon the Cross, we praise and bless Thy Holy Name.

B

The method of this miracle discloses one of the great principles by which Jesus has chosen consistently to act in bestowing His gifts upon men. He works through outward means. It would have been possible for Jesus to have stayed the feeling of hunger in the multitude by a hidden exercise of Divine power, which would have taken away their sense of want. But He chose to use His miraculous power, not in that hidden and unseen way, but in the striking outward means of creating food with which to satisfy their hunger. Almost every miracle bears witness to this preference for the use of outward means. But in this miracle a step further is made in disclosing the nature of the means which God adopts in His dealings with us. He works by delegation. He chooses men as the living instruments and means of His redemptive activities. Men become the channels of His sacramental energies, mediating to their fellow-men the grace of holiness and the gifts of Divine restoration. It was of deliberate choice that Jesus used the disciples to distribute the gifts of His bounty. "He took the five loaves and two fishes, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and brake and gave the loaves to the disciples, and the disciples to the multitudes." He had already used the services of the disciples to set the people in companies on the grass. It would have been a natural and beautiful thing if the Redeemer Himself had passed along the

rows, bestowing with His own hand to each immediately the gift which His Divine power was creating. But He designedly chose to use the disciples to distribute His gifts, and to make them the mediators of His bounty. In this distribution of material gifts Jesus revealed the principle which was to govern His bestowal of spiritual gifts in the life of the Church. Men were chosen to be the delegated agents of His Divine beneficence.

That is the secret of the life of ministry in the Church. God acts towards us in outward ways and through human agents, who are the living instruments of His gifts of pardon, life, and grace. It is a false antithesis which contrasts the sacramental ministry of man with the divine ministry of the Spirit. The ministry of man is the divinely consecrated method of the Spirit's activities. Just as God made the sacred humanity of His Son the instrument of our redemption and the means of our renewal, so the Incarnate Son uses men to be the instruments of His grace. God is not a God of confusion, but of order. It is so in the realm of Nature, as the discoveries in science increasingly reveal. It is reasonable that in the realm of spiritual things above all the principle of order should be most carefully observed. Thus the apostles, who had themselves received their commission directly from Christ, observing all things that He had commanded, and following the guidance of the Holy Spirit, laid down from the beginning the lines of Order which should govern the ministry of the Church. To the apostles themselves had been entrusted the regulation of the multitude who waited upon the divine bounty, and to them was given the distribution of

those gifts of grace which were stored by the life-giving Spirit in the Body of Christ.

Confusion, uncertainty, and loss have followed wherever that divine principle of Order has been broken or disregarded in the life of the Church. No prospect of more immediate spiritual gain, no hope of more direct personal approach to the Lord of glory, no desire to hasten the reunion of divided Christendom, has ever justified the abandonment of this divinely instituted Order. No one who has read the story of the Church from the earliest days can close his eyes to the persistent, scrupulous, and reverent care with which each generation has safeguarded the apostolic order of ministry.

The principle of delegation, which Jesus so conspicuously illustrated in this miracle, will be recognised as an appropriate feature in a Kingdom which is essentially mediatorial in character. To Jesus the ascended King has been entrusted the rule of the mediatorial Kingdom. He Who has won the victory over Satan by His Death and Resurrection is to receive the submission of all His foes, and gradually to extend the boundaries of His Kingdom until the kingdoms of the world have become the Kingdom of God and of His Christ. Then, at length, God shall be all in all. It is natural that the Kingdom of the Incarnate, founded upon the initial work of Christ's mediation, should offer the fullest illustration of the mediatorial principle in its life and organisation. Its working may be seen not only in the choice of men for the office of Holy Orders, but in the ministry of all the faithful, who possess the privilege of the lay priesthood. There is a work of mediation which belongs to all the members

of the Body of Christ. Each has his ministry of help, his work of service, by which in virtue of his own nearness to Christ he helps to bring others near to God. Jesus has offered to all the members of His Church both kingship and priesthood. The sacrament of Confirmation bringing the fullness of adult membership in the Church of Christ, makes us both kings and priests unto God. Each has his own sphere of rule and authority, each is dedicated to work of mediation and fellowship. But each in his own order. The gifts which are essentially needed for the continued life of the Church are entrusted with deliberate and definite precision, by public and open appointment to the ministry of Holy Orders. But the life of fellowship within the Church, and the personal influences of holiness and attractive persuasion by which others are drawn into the fold of the Church, are spheres less capable of precise definition, in which room is found for the exercise of the gifts of the lay priesthood. That individual vocation is a matter of personal revelation, which needs no formal public act of recognition on the part of the whole Church. The Holy Spirit guides each soul to realise the work for which God has chosen him. It is not a matter of public appointment. But it is a personal consecration of God-given powers to be used in the service of Christ. God has claimed our human powers to set forth His glory and to set forward His Kingdom. God works through human means. We are set for service, not only for salvation. It is of God's infinite mercy that our work of service is also a work of salvation. And the work which comes to each is a delegated work of ministry, received from the hands of Christ Himself, through the revelation

of the Spirit. It is Christ's power working in us which makes us effective in what we undertake. It is the grace of His sacred humanity which enriches us, that our humanity may lay hold of others and bring them into union with Him. We are mediators of His power, His holiness, and His love.

Perhaps it is this less official work of delegated ministry which we most need to recall to-day. We are apt to hide behind the more conspicuous responsibilities of those who are called to Holy Orders. Lay ministry is weak, faltering, and incoherent. The existence of the Church depends upon the preservation of its Holy Orders. Yet the welfare of the Church, its effectiveness, its vitality and influence depend upon those manifold ministries of individual service, by which the laity test and realise the meaning of their priesthood. What is my service? How am I "apprehended" of Christ, that I may bring others captive to His love? What gifts of Christ have been distributed through me? In long rows the multitudes in their companies of hundreds and fifties are stretched at my feet faint, hungry, expectant. Has Christ not called me to their aid? Has He not said, "Give ye them to eat"? Have I not my own small hoard, just "five barley loaves and two small fishes"? They are nothing for such a multitude. But have I offered them? Let me give my poor powers into the hands of Jesus, those hands of God that multiply, and consecrate, and bless.

A Prayer for Obedience to Vocation.

O God, Who hast made all those that are born again in Christ to be kings and priests unto Thee, grant us both the will and the power to do what Thou commandest, that we may serve Thee in holiness and reign with Thee in glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C

Even if we could not recognise it for ourselves, the words of our Lord recorded by St. John show that Jesus had intended the miraculous Feeding of the Multitude to be in part a prophecy of that Feeding of the souls of men, which the institution of the Eucharist was to provide. The facts of the miracle suggest two great truths about the Sacrament. Jesus is revealed as the great Giver, Whose lavish gifts supply with plenty all the needs of men. So the Eucharist is the Feast, spread by divine Hands, ministered by divine bounty, which provides abundantly for the diverse and manifold wants of human souls. To remember this is to set aside all those hesitations and questionings which hinder the simple, frank, and unembarrassed acceptance of its repeated miracle. It is God Who gives. We can set no limit to the wonder of His gift. The Eucharist is prodigal in its blessings. Body and soul alike share in its benediction. It heals, it absolves, it renews, it creates, it refreshes, it consoles. It gives energy to the will, it purifies the affections, it gives light to the mind and new Godward direction to all the impulses of the life. Its power of enrichment adds new strength to every faculty, aptitude and capacity of the soul.

It is a new faith in the fullness of this transfiguring power, which we need every time we draw near to the Altar. It is not enough once to have realised the glorious fullness and unfathomable wealth of the sanctifying power of the Eucharistic Presence of Christ. We cannot safely live on past acts of realisation. Day by day we must gather up our ever-new experiences of the bounty of God, in all the manifold relations of our

daily life. Each day we look up to God the Giver with a new energy of faith. At the beginning of the day our morning prayer voices in some simple way the expectancy of the soul, which sets itself anew to look for fresh evidences of the generosity of God. Every night our evening thanksgiving stays the haste, which would pass heedless to the morrow's duties, and gathering up the mercies of the day fixes within the soul the sense of the Divine goodness. So the power to recognise God in His daily gifts, the sense of His abundant readiness to help, the appreciation of His sufficiency for all our needs become more real and more habitual in our life. We live more open-eyed to the signs of God's love, more responsive to the quiet appeal of His unfailing generosity.

Thus when we come to the Altar we come with a fuller sense of the goodness of God, and with a clearer vision of the way in which the grace there received will manifest itself in the work and routine of our ordinary life. Every fresh act of faith in the greatness of God's sacramental gift, made anew at each fresh approach to the Eucharist must show a growth and advance upon all that has gone before, because it embodies new experience. That increasing faith in the fullness of God's bounty brings us more expectantly to the Altar. And it makes us more definite in the intention and desires with which we come. There is no vagueness in our approach. We know in what real and effective ways this Eucharistic grace will strengthen our daily life. It is food for the actual work of life, for the common round and daily task.

"Thou art coming to a King,
Large petitions with thee bring."

We often lose much of the happiness and blessing of our eucharistic worship, because we have not set before us clearly the unsearchable fullness of the grace which God there bestows. He gives as only God can give. He gives with infinite wisdom and with infinite power. He gives not merely for future happiness, but for present needs. To recognise the great bounty of God is to bind ourselves to a disciplined and effective use of His gifts. That is what we need,—a reverent and ample sense of the majesty and goodness of God, which will make us both gloriously expectant in our approach to the Altar, and scrupulously diligent in our use of the sacramental grace which we receive. Happy experience teaches us that we can set no limits to the wonderful power of Divine grace. God is greater than our hearts, and His gifts surpass in grandeur all our hopes. The words of the apostle, which find their final illustration in the bliss of the world to come, are true also of the heaven upon earth which the Eucharist creates. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for those that love Him."

"He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye?" Thus is the law of correspondence declared, which governs the life of grace. Divine grace demands a definite response on the part of man. There must be a readiness to give on our part, before the great Giver can come to our aid with the fullness of His own miraculous gift. Our own part is very small and our gift seems very unworthy and almost too meagre to offer, but it is the sign of our willingness to correspond and the token of our fitness to receive. God's gifts of grace cannot be forced upon us. The ways of

Divine love will not violate the freedom which He has given us. We must desire before we can be fed. We must put out our hands before they can be filled. There must be a welcome which we extend to the offer of Divine grace. Repentance, faith, obedience are the three signs of true welcome which God requires. Repentance may be but a poor expression of sorrowing love, faith may be but a struggling victory over doubt, obedience may be after all but a faltering submission to the Divine commands; but if these are the best we can offer, then God comes to meet us with His miracle of grace. Even in the sphere of material things God asks for our humble earthly offering, that He may receive at our hands the lowly creaturely forms, which are to be the external media of His sacramental grace. There stands the Font. We bring the water, we speak the divinely-given words, and God meets our lowly offering with the gift of the Indwelling Spirit. There kneel the children before the bishop. He lays his hands upon them. He speaks the words of prayer, and the miracle of Confirmation is God's response. There glows the Altar. Over the simple elements of bread and wine—"these Thy creatures"—the priest speaks the words of eucharistic institution, and God the all-giver gives Himself. So wondrously does God keep faith with those who believe His promise and obey His word.

"God gives but He never carries home." So runs the Macedonian proverb. The very principle of sacrament demands man's co-operation. It is for us to set free the wonder-working power of God by the readiness and obedience of our offering. The poverty of human effort only enhances the glory of the Divine

achievement. No poverty of ours can restrain the fullness of the Divine power, if we offer the best that we have. "How many loaves have ye?" Let us be ready in simple faith to bring all that we have of our poor store for the blessing of God, and never shall we find the power of His creative love exhausted.

A Prayer for the Use of Grace.

Lord Jesu, Who with Thine own creative Hand didst feed the hungering multitude in the wilderness, and dost give Thyself, the living Bread, to be to us the Food of eternal life, grant that we may so reverently treasure and so diligently use this gift of Thy bounty, that we may grow in grace and in thankfulness to Thee, Who givest us all things richly to enjoy, God blessed for evermore.

VIII

THE FAITH OF THE APOSTLES

St. Matthew xvi. 13–24; St. Mark ix. 27–33; St. Luke ix. 18–23.

The Ministry of the Galilean Days was drawing to its close. It was closing in evident failure. There had been no want of enthusiasm, but the enthusiasm was itself the very sign of Christ's failure, for it was based upon a misconception of His mission. The Prophet of Nazareth had been received with acclamation. His miracles had won for Him a ready hearing. He had found audiences eager and attentive. But His words had fallen upon impatient ears. The Galileans had room for one thought only. They wanted political freedom, they looked for a national kingdom. In Jesus they saw the leader they were seeking. They would make Him king. That was all that His divine mission meant to them,—escape from the bondage of Rome. They had learnt no new loyalty. They had seen no vision of God. They felt no Divine Presence. Jesus, therefore, began to withdraw from the crowded scenes of His earlier ministry. It was not really upon the crowds that He had trusted. From the first He knew what was in man, and "did not commit Himself to any" even in the height of His popularity. There were His disciples. If He were not God to the people,

what was He to His chosen disciples, whom He had designed to carry on His work? He had never promised Himself swift success. But if success were ever at all to crown His work, He must leave on earth disciples, who could bear witness to the truth of His Person, men whose loyalty was sure, whose vision was clear, who grasped the meaning of His mission. Were the Twelve nearer to the truth than their fellow-countrymen? Was there after all any foundation already laid, upon which Jesus could presently build with safety? That was what Jesus set Himself to prove, as He withdrew His followers from the crowds of Galilee, and turned towards Cæsarea Philippi to gather His forces for the crisis that lay before Him.

A

It is remarkable how little is revealed of that intimate converse which Jesus held with His disciples in their frequent journeyings to and fro. Yet these must have been the moments when the deepest impressions were made upon their minds. In such intercourse they came nearest to the heart and mind of the Master. In those conversations in the house or by the way, Jesus interpreted to them the inner meaning of His public acts and developed the great truths of His public teaching. Here was the opportunity for mutual self-revelation. While Jesus brought them slowly to understand more of His Person, and showed them more fully the great secret of His mission, the disciples on their side were led to open out their minds to Him, and to reveal themselves in the frank intimacies of happy friendship. Their minds were a

mirror in which many of the doubts and beliefs of the people of Galilee were reflected. They were very sensitive to the temper and mood of their fellow-countrymen, with whose daily lives and common hopes they were still so closely bound. The difficulties, the prejudices, the hesitations of Galilee were still for the most part their own. They differed from the others only in that they had faith enough in the Person of Jesus to trust that under His leadership they would presently find their hopes fulfilled and realise the coming of the Kingdom of God.

And now as they left behind them the more familiar scenes of Galilee, and found themselves in the pagan surroundings of Cæsarea Philippi, a natural opportunity was found to reflect upon the incidents of the past year. They were removed from the pressure of that public opinion of which they had always been conscious. Jesus would call them to realise what their own convictions were. He would ask for a decision. It was for them to say whether they had advanced beyond the misconception of Galilee. Jesus led them to this declaration of faith by asking first what impression His work had made upon others. What did men think of the Son of Man? There was no doubt as to the attitude of certain leaders of the people. The Pharisees, the Scribes, the Priests, and the Sadducees rejected His claim to authority, and had already ranged themselves in common hostility against Him. But what of the eager crowds of Galilee who had shown Him such frequent welcome? The disciples knew well what place even the highest estimate of the people had given Him. It was not that of an entirely new force at work among men, nor of a personality of

unique power in their midst. They saw in Him no new departure in the ways of Divine revelation. At the most it was the return of one of the great prophets to complete his unfinished work. Perhaps John the Baptist, whose work had been cut short by Herod. His stirring words of moral appeal, his righteous life, his promise of the Kingdom had raised hopes, which seemed still unfulfilled. The holiness of Christ's Life, the moral earnestness of His teaching recalled the spirit of the Baptist, though many had realised this difference, that "John did no miracles." The return of Elijah was confidently expected to prepare the way of the Lord. There was a common hope that Jeremiah would return, bringing back the Ark which he had hidden against the great Day of the Lord. Men thought that Jesus might be one of these forerunners of the Messiah. Some assigned Him no higher place than any of the prophets might claim, just one of those messengers of God, whose words of warning and hope had fallen so often upon dull and heavy ears. Here was no faith upon which God's Kingdom could be built, here was no ground for new venture, no hope for the dawn of a new and glorious day.

Then Jesus flashed the question upon the disciples themselves. "But who say ye that I am?" Had they come to a decision? Had they cleared themselves of all doubt? Could they boldly separate themselves from the indecision and uncertainty of the multitude? Had the appeal of Christ found its true response in the hearts of His disciples? Could the Saviour yet see aught of the travail of His soul and be satisfied? Eagerly the answer of faith flashed back from the lips of St. Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the

Son of the living God." For himself and for his brethren he spoke with the immediate certainty of true conviction. He might not know the steps by which the great conclusion had been reached. He might not realise all that his words actually meant. But his heart told him that his words were true. And he knew that he spoke for his fellows as truly as he spoke for himself. Jesus accepted the act of faith with joy. He knew how much was yet unrealised, how slowly the full truth of that confession was yet to be won by anxious and frequent doubt. But he welcomed the eager response as the earnest of the coming victory, to which His earthly life was moving through the paths of suffering and death. Jesus recognised the work of God the Father. These disciples were the gift of the Father to His faithful Son. "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me." It was by the secret working of His inspiration, not by the slow processes of human understanding, that this confession had been reached. It was a revelation of God, not a discovery of man. God had vindicated His choice of the disciples. The voice from heaven, which at the Baptism and at the Transfiguration set the seal of God upon the Deity of Christ, had now found a true echo upon earth on the lips of a faithful apostolate. "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father, which is in heaven."

"Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah." The benediction of God rested upon the man of faith. God had made him the mouthpiece of his brethren's inarticulate faith. The true creative gifts of leadership were his. He was to be the leader in that great movement of faith, by which men giving themselves into the hands

of an unseen Lord, were to build upon earth the very Kingdom of God. It should be his, renewed in loyalty, confirmed in power, to strengthen his brethren. In that new Kingdom, where men should walk by faith and not by sight, where the ways of God and not the ways of men prevailed, where God ruled not by might, nor by power, but by His Spirit, St. Peter should lead the way in the exercise of those Spirit-given powers, by which the divine pardon, peace and strength become efficacious in the lives of men. In that great Kingdom the powers of heaven were to be realised on earth. Through the medium of frail but faithful manhood the life of God was to touch the life of men.

In the establishing of this new Kingdom, the Church of God, St. Peter was to take the place of leader among his brethren. "And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven." These words might seem difficult of sure interpretation, if we had not the Divine comment upon them which the actual history of the early Church affords. We watch the beginnings of the life of the Church, as St. Luke records the story of its earliest days, and we see St. Peter exercising the promised leadership among his fellow-apostles. He speaks in the name of all on the day of Pentecost, the first preacher of the Gospel. He is the first to fulfil that duty laid upon all the apostles, of witnessing to the truth as it is in Jesus. His brave championship of the truth drew upon him and upon his fellow-witness,

St. John, the first efforts of that persecution at the hands of the enemies of Christ, which was continually to test the faith and purify the life of the Church. In the death of Ananias and Sapphira, we see St. Peter exercising for the first time that authority of judgeship in the Church, which was promised in the power of "binding" and "loosing." Under the special urgency of the divine vision, which overcame his Jewish scruples with the warning revelation, "What God hath cleansed, make not thou common," St. Peter was the first to use the Christ-given key to unlock the gates of heaven to the Gentiles.

In all these things we see how wonderfully Christ used the apostle's natural gifts of leadership in those first critical days of the Church, and how loyal St. Peter was to the commission of his Lord. For with all the moral pre-eminence, which his natural leadership gave him, there was no abuse of the apostolic authority, which he shared with his brethren. He might enjoy that personal eminence among the other apostles, to which the words of Christ had pointed, but he exercised no jurisdiction nor authority of office over them. If it was to him that the authority to "bind" and "loose" was first promised by Jesus, he remembered that the same "power of the keys" was promised almost immediately after in almost identical terms to all the apostles together. With solemn emphasis Jesus had spoken the words, which were the charter of apostolic authority, "Verily I say unto you, What things soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and what things soever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." If after the Resurrection in the presence of the other disciples Jesus had given him the

threefold charge to feed His sheep, St. Peter remembered that after his threefold denial such a solemn restitution to office was needed, that he might retain the full confidence of his brethren. The "lambs" and the "sheep," which were his to "tend" and "feed," were not the other apostles, neither was he the sole nor the chief shepherd of the flock of Christ. The Easter commission of the risen Lord was given to all the disciples alike in the Upper Room, "As the Father hath sent Me, even so send I you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosesoever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them, whosesoever sins ye retain they are retained." St. Peter therefore claimed no lordship over his brother-apostles. There were no degrees of apostolic authority. At the first Council of "the apostles and the elders" of the Church at Jerusalem, the apostles Peter, Barnabas, and Paul were the chief speakers, but it was St. James who held the place of honour, and the decree of the Council was put forth with these words of authority, "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us." St. Peter evidently made no claim to superior authority over his brethren. He shared the same apostolic authority as they. He was glad to use his personal eminence, when it could avail for the fuller witness to Christ. But even that personal eminence had its moments of eclipse. "When Cephas came to Antioch," says St. Paul, "I resisted him to the face, because he stood condemned." And St. Paul was right. St. Peter was in the wrong, neither was there any fault to find with his brother-apostle for the strong attitude of criticism and rebuke, which he had taken up. It was a momentary

lapse. Henceforth the cause of Gentile freedom was as safe in the care of St. Peter as it was in the hands of St. Paul.

"Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah." The benediction of St. Peter, realised first in the gift of faith, by which he was able to confess the Deity of Christ, was developed in the strengthening of his character by the Holy Spirit, by which stability, lowliness, courage and endurance became the marks of one who had been impulsive, weak and impatient of suffering. He was made worthy of his Christ-given name, the Rock. To use the words of the epistle that bears his name, "the Chief Shepherd" would not find this "fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ," lording it over the charge allotted to him, but "as a good steward of the grace of God, ministering as of the strength which God supplieth, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ." It was part of the benediction of faith, that it created a character firm and stable, strong enough to be used in the foundation of the Church of Christ. In that foundation Peter held no place of solitary honour. Beside him were ranged the other apostles, so that St. Paul could welcome the Christians of Asia Minor as "fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief corner stone." And in the vision of the Church made perfect, the Seer of Patmos saw that "the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." Thus when St. Peter spoke, out of the very depths of failure Christ saw the glorious vision of success, achieved at length through ages of

effort, doubt and pain, but made certain now by this simple faith, which through the darkness thrust out resolute hands of human weakness to be clasped in the firm grip of God.

A Prayer for Unity.

O Almighty God, Who hast built Thy Church upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the head corner stone, grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit by their doctrine, that we may be made an holy temple acceptable unto Thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

B

The words of St. Peter rang with the tone of splendid certainty. It was his way to speak impulsively. But never had he been challenged on a theme so solemn. If in the ordinary intercourse of life he was often carried away by eager impulse, too quick for thought, now he seemed to be raised above himself by some strong power of deep conviction. It was a moment of sudden revelation. There had been no open sign of such belief in any of his deeds or words. It was the sudden uprising to consciousness of a faith, which had been growing in secret, the unexpected expression of a truth yet imperfectly realised. The words were a prophecy of a faith, which, becoming explicit in the power of the Spirit, eventually made St. Peter the first witness of the Master's Resurrection, the steadfast champion of His Deity, the fearless leader of His Church.

The answer of Jesus, with which He rewarded the confession of St. Peter, reveals a great principle in the spiritual life—the creative power of the divine insight in the lives of men, one of the most effective means by

which the Love of God draws the souls of men out of darkness into light, and moulds them to the purpose for which they were made. "Thou art Peter." Back to the disciple's mind must have rushed those first words of welcome and promise, with which Jesus greeted him in the wilderness of Judæa. "Thou art Simon the son of John. Thou shalt be called Cephas." How shifting, how unstable was the character which Simon brought to the service of Christ,—sanguine, frank, guileless indeed, but indulgent, weak, undisciplined, apt enough for eager activities of service, but slow of thought and dull of spiritual understanding. In the quick impulsiveness, the hasty optimism, the ready complacency, the restlessness of the eager fisherman, Christ saw the clear-eyed vision, the alert and loyal faith, the self-conquest and self-forgetfulness of the apostle. To the development of those unseen powers, of that unrealised greatness Jesus gave the years of His ministry. To this end were directed that closer intimacy, that growing responsibility of leadership among his fellows under the Master's eye, which marked the training of St. Peter. There seemed little evidence of any quicker spiritual vision, which could distinguish him from his brethren. The earthly kingdom, with its material rewards for loyalty and service, with its splendours of royalty for the Master and its glories for Israel—this was the extent of the disciple's hopes. When these hopes suddenly failed, his loyalty failed with them. They all forsook Jesus and fled. But St. Peter alone denied Him. Even the power of this confession left him then. He seemed abased to the level of a traitor. Yet the Divine Love never left him, never despaired. It was this divine

trust, of which the look of Jesus assured him in the courtyard of the palace of Caiaphas. As that look of Christ held the shrinking disciple to loyalty, and kept him from despair at the moment of his greatest shame, so this promise "Thou art Peter," assured him of his place in the counsels of God, at the very moment when he knew that the words of his confession outstripped the powers of his understanding, and he felt himself to be unequal to the claims which the acknowledged Godhead of Jesus made upon his service.

So is it ever with ourselves. "Beloved, if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things." This is our confidence, that in our weakness and our sin, known to us so fully in our moments of insight, there is yet an inner self, into which the eye of God can pierce, where there are possibilities of goodness not yet revealed, powers of loyalty and truth yet unrealised, aspirations and apprehensions yet unborn. It is upon these that the hope of God rests. The world has no knowledge of this greater self. Men must judge us roughly by the sum of our outward success. Our weaknesses are so manifest, our failures so evident. They can see no deeper, they have no knowledge of all we have tried to be. The slowly built foundation which rises not yet above the ground,—that is beyond their gaze.

And as the world is blind, so can we ourselves be blind to what is truest in ourselves, and lose the hope which holds us to the highest. Of those who are truly earnest in their Christian discipleship, who hold the high ideal of Christ before them and know the strain and effort of daily obedience, there are few who

have not suffered moments of sad depression, as they view the growing difficulty of their work, the poverty of their equipment and the hindrances to success. In these moods of despondence the will is relaxed, imagination seizes control and fears paralyse activity. Then it is that we need to look at ourselves with the vision of God. It is not that we think too much of ourselves, as we are often told. Rather we do not think enough of ourselves. We want to see ourselves as God sees us. If it be true that there is sin and rebellion in our hearts, still it is God's view of that sin which we need. The sin becomes more grievous to behold, but its forgiveness becomes more sure, its overthrow more certain. The misused powers become capacities for greater service. We see that there is no sin too great, too established, for the Divine Love to pardon. The spiritual listlessness, which long-cherished sin begets, flees before the new realisation of the soul's dignity, which this vision gives. It is not what we are, but what we may be, what we shall be, that holds us. Our gaze is arrested, not at our unaided human powers, however brilliant, but we see each capacity upheld and enriched by the energy of the indwelling Spirit. It is the presence of the Spirit which gives permanence, increase, fulfilment to each separate aptitude and talent. Beneath the "Simon" of our unaided human powers and efforts lies the "Cephas" of our Spirit-born energies of life and character. It is this vision of faith that makes us rock-men in the service of Christ, and enables us to lay at His feet the offering of a life surrendered in all its powers.

And if the life be one of success, and victory crowns the efforts that we make, all the more do we need this

vision of faith, which realises all that God sees in the soul. For the effective power of the life in the Divine eye is seen to be even greater than we dared to hope. After all, our ideal has been too low. We have been satisfied with less than the best. All that has been achieved owes its greatness and its enduring character to what God has given, to what God has been, to us. All that may yet be achieved in His power presents a picture of unexpected beauty and perfection. Gifts that we thought to have been denied to us, powers that we have never been able to appreciate, capacities never yet apprehended, are seen to be ours in this vision which God has of our soul. We needs must love the highest when we see it. Love and faith go hand in hand; not love of ourselves, but love of God the Giver; not faith in ourselves, but faith in God the Author and Finisher. So God is ever re-creating our lives by flashing before our eyes the mirror of the Divine love in which our greatness shines.

It is the work of the Holy Spirit to hold this mirror to our eyes. "In Thy light shall we see light." When we kneel in prayer, this is the mirror into which we gaze. There we see what God would have us be, and read His great purposes of love. Our intercession is the lifting up of others' lives into the light that streams from the throne of God. In that light of truth we see our prayers for them fulfilled. Their lives assume a greater beauty in our eyes, and something of God's mercy and steadfastness and love enters into the spirit of our prayer. For them, as for ourselves, the Spirit reveals the inner reality of beauty and strength, that lies hid beneath the poor semblance of our daily experience.

A Prayer for Faith.

Almighty God, Who hast made us for Thyself and hast given us gifts with which to praise Thee, and hast enriched us with grace that we may worthily serve Thee, grant that in the steadfast vision of Thy love we may be comforted in danger, strengthened in weakness and made perfect in Thy obedience, through Jesus Christ, our blessed Advocate and Redeemer.

C

"The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." "I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." This is the great charter of life which Christ gave to His Church. The life of the Church was to be indestructible, victorious over death, unending. Its power was to be effective beyond the limits of earth. Its energies were heavenly, supernatural. The assurance of both its life and power rested upon the Deity of Christ. It was impossible for St. Peter yet to understand the splendour of these promises. The spiritual possibilities of the Kingdom could not be realised by him yet, because the Deity of Christ, though formally confessed by a prophetic act of faith, was not fully understood.

But after Pentecost, when with a new certainty the apostle preached Jesus Christ as God and Lord, and boldly made proof of these new powers of the Spirit, with which Jesus had endowed His Church, he found fulfilment of the Master's promise. Already he could defy persecution and death, knowing that the victory of the Church was assured. Already Christ had vindicated His Divine Presence in the Church.

Already the apostle knew that his weak words of ministerial authority were ratified and made effective as the very voice of God Himself. "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." "Behold the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door and shall carry thee out." "Repent and be baptised every one of you, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." The apostles had ample proof of the reality of that Divine power which was mediated through their ministry. The word of authority in the Church was the Word of God. Forgiveness, the prerogative of God alone, which had been exercised by Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, on earth in His own Person, was now bestowed through the ministry of His Body the Church. The word of loosing spoken on earth was ratified by the Lord of Heaven. The guidance of the Spirit in the plenitude of truth and power assured the heavenly reality which the word of Christ promised. Thus early in his ministry St. Peter found proof of the greatness of the powers with which the apostles were entrusted. All this lay hidden in the Deity of Christ, which in that vision he confessed.

"The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." This is not merely an assurance that the life of the Church is not disturbed by death, continuing one and unbroken beyond the grave. It is a promise of final triumph, of immortality. In every age men have needed to rely upon that promise, for at no time has the life of the Church seemed to human eyes secure from danger. The lowliness of God, which was the mark of the Incarnate life of Jesus, finds new

expression in the life of His Church. The expectation of St. Peter, that triumph, immediate and overpowering, must assuredly attend the progress of a Divine Monarch, has been too often repeated in the hearts of Christian disciples throughout the ages. Such a progress of unbroken success it was in the power of God to ensure, had it been His will. But it was God's will not to break and cast away the manhood which He had made for His glory, because it had failed in holiness and obedience. He would not supersede it by agencies which could not err. But He chose to redeem it by the Incarnation of His Son and to use its redeemed energies as the means to final triumph. But such a triumph must be slow, though its success must be sure. The Church, sphere as it is of the Divine Presence, and bearer of Divine Grace, displays still the hesitations, the weaknesses and the imperfection of our finite and mortal nature. It needed all the glowing faith of St. Paul and the ardent prophetic vision of St. John to encourage the Church to stand fast, fearless and triumphant, in the first days of persecution and contempt. It was the vision of the Son of Man, glorious in the powers of Deity, walking "in the midst of the candlesticks" which brought hope to the Church. So it has ever been. Waning of belief in the Deity of Christ has always weakened the energies of the Church and paralysed its witness. The strength of the Church in its earliest days lay in its clear assurance of the Godhead of Jesus and in its reliance upon His Divine Presence.

Persecution for His Name's sake served to intensify this faith, and to throw the Church back more firmly upon its divine resources of strength and renewal.

When persecution ceased, new dangers arose. Constantine removed all penalties from the profession of Christianity. The secularisation of the spirit of the Church which followed upon the imperial favour, culminated in such a victory for Arianism that "the whole world groaned to find itself Arian." Athanasius alone, fearlessly championing the Deity of Jesus, stemmed the tide of unfaith. And in our own land thirteen centuries later, the days when men despaired of the Church, when its moral and spiritual witness was weakest, the days of open and profound disregard of religion, when membership of the Church was a subject of general ridicule, were the days when the denial of the Godhead of Jesus was at its height. Even Bishop Butler could be brought to regard the condition of the Church as beyond hope, and Archbishop Leighton could see in the Church only "a fair carcase without spirit." Such weakening of the fundamental faith in the Deity of its Head must always be far more perilous to the life of the Church than severities of external persecution. Yet through such dangers the promise of Christ has stood firm. There has been no surrender. There has been no defeat. "The gates of Hades" have not prevailed. God has still "poured heaven into this shut house of life" through the Word and Sacraments of His Church. There has been no loss of divine authority, no lack of divine power. What is loosed or bound on earth has been loosed or bound in heaven. The divine guidance, the divine ratification have never failed.

Dangers of our own day seem always greater than those which beset our fathers. In our own anxieties we also must be guided by a serene and stable faith in

this promise of unfailing life and of certain grace, with which our divine Head has endowed His Church. There could be no permanence for the Church, it could be no treasury of needed grace, if it were only an institution of man's devising, a fellowship of merely human creation. But if Jesus Who created it be indeed God, then it needs but the obedience of human faith to make His will effective through the Church for the redemption and uplifting of the world. But the divine way must still be the way of patience. Human ignorance, human pride, human selfishness, human sloth will still be the hindrances to advance. Civilisation has not lessened the need of redemption. Culture has not made the intellect less proud. Freedom has not broken the chains of lust. Organisation has only accentuated man's selfishness. Education, wanting in fullness and proportion, has set a false contrast between reason and faith. Faith itself, following the blind guidance of impulse and emotion, has refused the discipline of authority and truth. Everything is at the cross-roads. Yet in all the darkness and insecurity of the future, the promise of Christ stands sure—not the promise of numbers, of honour, nor of popularity, but the promise of life and grace to the Church that is faithful to His leadership. To be faithful to the confession of His Deity may mean desertion, poverty, and scorn. But it means security in the things that matter, life and grace, liberty and hope. To believe that Jesus is God is to be secure in His divine care for the Church, to accept the priesthood as He has ordained it through His Spirit-guided apostles, to believe that no essential gift of grace or truth has ever been lacking to the Church through all

the ages, to recognise that no weakness of human personality impairs the fullness of the Divine grace of which men are the ministers, to know that in the fellowship of His Church "the little one shall become a thousand and the small one a strong nation. I the Lord will hasten it in its time."

It becomes a heroic discipline to fix the eyes of faith unwaveringly upon the vision of Christ moving in His Church, when there are so many imperfections, so many contradictions, so many signs of weakness and uncertainty in those who ought to be its leaders to-day. How is the simple believer to retain his loyalty and preserve his faith? He must go back to the great fundamental truth of the Gospel, the Godhead of Jesus. He must build up his life upon that foundation.

Often we are like St. Peter, so imperfectly realising what our great confession means. The deepest truths may be those which are so familiar that we do not make them really our own by careful meditation. "Christ, the Son of the living God"—that is our confession. Let us dwell, then, on the attributes of His Godhead,—His eternity, His power, His majesty, His love and His victorious Will. But chiefly we must realise His Godhead by a new energy of prayer. It is by prayer that we make the Personality of God most real to us, and enter most fully into the consciousness of His fellowship with us in our daily life. We shall seek all that makes God near to us. We will renew our prayers and reinforce our intercessions. We will meditate upon the revelation of God in Christ which the story of the Gospel gives, treasuring all the marks of Deity which we can gather. We will study anew the beginnings of the Church and see how the promise

of the Divine Presence is fulfilled. We will frequent the Altar and find in it the earthly Throne of God. The grace we receive is the gift of God Himself. He gives us Himself that we may worthily co-operate with Him. We realise that the trials of to-day are not the sign that we are forsaken, but the call to each of us to prove our manhood, take our place under the banner of our King. It is our faith and our patience, which will win the day for God, and preserve the heritage of His Church for the generations yet to come. The kingdom that we have received is a kingdom that cannot be shaken, for it is the Kingdom of the Incarnate God, even of Christ, the Son of the living God.

A Prayer for the Church.

O God of eternal might and everlasting love, Who hast built Thy Church upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone, and hast promised that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, mercifully sustain us in this faith; and make Thy strength perfect in our weakness, that being made more than conquerors by Thy grace we may triumph against all our enemies, and by the faithful witness of our lives may extend Thy Kingdom among all nations, to the glory of Thee and of Thy Son Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit, Who is the Life of Thy Church and the Sanctifier of Thy people.

IX

THE TRANSFIGURATION

St. Matthew xvii. 1–13; St. Mark ix. 2–13; St. Luke ix. 28–36.

The time had come when the revelation of Christ's Deity, which the disciples had been so slow to learn from their daily intercourse with Jesus in the Galilean Days of miracle and teaching, was to be enforced by a special disclosure to the three chosen apostles, Peter, James, and John. The withdrawal from the more public life of frequent instruction and healing had been used by Jesus to lead the disciples to a closer study of His Person. He gave Himself more fully to them. He tried to create in them that expectation of a Messiah of spiritual power and moral supremacy, which was so foreign to the hopes of their fellow-countrymen. He brought them back to the Scriptures which they knew, that they might realise more truly the nature of that supreme fulfilment, for which both the Law and the Prophets were a divine preparation. The days of His ministry were already drawing to a close, and if under the staggering blow of the Crucifixion the hearts of the disciples were not to be entirely crushed, there must be some foundation of personal faith, however dim which could carry them through the hours of gloom, until the glory of the Resurrection should break

upon them. The crisis of this training in faith is seen in the Transfiguration.

The Feast of Tabernacles was drawing near, when the thoughts of the disciples naturally turned towards the great lawgiver of Sinai. Jesus would keep this festival with them apart from the crowded gaiety of the national gathering at Jerusalem. As the day waned He led them to a hill, from which most of the scenes of His Galilean labours would be visible. Leaving nine disciples at the foot, Jesus ascended the wooded slopes with St. Peter, St. James, and St. John, intent upon solitude and prayer. "He took with Him Peter and John and James, and went up into the mountain to pray."

A

The Transfiguration was a crisis in the life of Jesus Himself. "And as He was praying the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment became white and dazzling." Jesus was praying. At every crisis we are told of His prayer. The crisis that faced Him was very definite. He was to enter upon the last stage of His ministry, which led to the Passion. At each step God had given to His Son that assurance of the divine approval which His manhood sought. Jesus had prayed at His Baptism, and He had passed to His public work with the reassuring Voice of the Father urging Him upon His way, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased." Now He prayed, and the words of divine acceptance led Him down into the valley of death. The Transfiguration was God's answer to Christ's need. It disclosed the Father's will, and strengthened the manhood of Christ

for the struggle that lay before Him. There was nothing in the outward surroundings of Christ's life to deepen hope or encourage faith. Every attempt to unfold the spiritual nature of His work had failed. It was not only the common people who resisted the evidence of His works and misconstrued the purpose of His teaching. The disciples themselves had failed. It might well be that at such a moment of choice the old temptation of Satan might return with vivid force, and the challenge of Peter be accepted, to prove that the work of the Messiah could be fulfilled without suffering. Death was, after all, such an unnatural "exodus" for One so sinless, so divine. Even the perfection of His humanity would warrant an end more glorious. Surely the primal destiny of man was one which should find fulfilment, not through the grave and gate of death, but through some transfiguration of glory. Man was made for fellowship with God. In all the stages of growing approximation to the beauty of the divine image there would be no place for the agony and suffering of death; where there was no sin there would be no corruption. When earthly life ceased, the transition to the heavenly life would come by a transfiguration of glory, which would be the emergence into visible splendour of all those hidden powers of divine fellowship by which the sinless life had been gradually perfected. It would seem natural then that the perfect Man should close His earthly course by an "exodus" of glory. Such a possibility must have been presented to the stainless soul of Jesus by the subtlety of the tempter. Had Jesus accepted such an end to His ministry He would indeed have vindicated what was due to His sinless

humanity, and appropriate to the glory of His Godhead. But He would not have been the Redeemer. He would have passed in glory, but He would have passed alone. He would not have identified Himself with sinful man. He would not have carried manhood victoriously out of the grip of sin, nor through the gate of death. This was the temptation which was set before Him now—to escape from the Passion, and by a translation of glory to quit Himself of the trammels of earth, and return to the peace of Heaven, leaving man unredeemed. With resolute will Jesus chose the redemptive way of the Cross, and the approving Voice of the Father from heaven confirmed the choice which His love had made. Thus the manhood of Jesus was cheered and strengthened as He ratified anew His self-dedication to the atoning death of the Cross. Henceforth there was a new urgency in His desire for the Passion. He had a new baptism to be baptised with, and His soul was straitened until it was accomplished. From the Mount of Transfiguration Jesus looked with steadfast gaze upon the Mount of Calvary. It was with a will set resolutely upon the coming sacrifice that Jesus descended the Mount and gave Himself anew to the needs of suffering and sinful mankind.

A Memorial of the Transfiguration.

O God, Who on the mount didst reveal to chosen witnesses Thine only begotten Son, wonderfully transfigured, in raiment white and glistening, mercifully grant that we, being delivered from the turmoil of this world, may be permitted to behold the King in His beauty, Who with Thee, O Father, and Thee, O Holy Ghost, liveth and reigneth, one God, world without end.

B

But if the Transfiguration marked a crisis in the soul of Jesus Himself, it was even more evidently a turning point in the education of the disciples. It was the divine response to the momentous confession in which St. Peter had declared the faith of the apostles in the Godhead of the Saviour. Those words had expressed a faith which was a sudden flash of insight rather than the result of gradual thought and steadfast reflection. This faith, which was but the inspiration of a moment, might be reinforced and made permanent by such a revelation as the vision of the transfigured Christ would bring. The Transfiguration confirmed their faith in His Godhead, while it guarded them from errors into which the very fervour of their faith might easily betray them. To them Godhead and suffering seemed wholly irreconcilable. But the vision on the mount disclosed the certain purpose of Christ's death, as a secret shared already by their most trusted spiritual teachers. If to the eyes of Moses and Elijah the path of suffering was indeed the way of the Messiah, then the disciples would be forced to give greater attention to those predictions of suffering which Jesus had just begun to utter.

The disciples were not expecting any new revelation. Tired with the fatigues of the day they had accompanied Jesus up the hillside, and while Jesus prayed they slept. Jesus reviewed the needs of His disciples. He was about to withdraw them more fully from the distractions of His public life into the closer intimacy of more secluded intercourse. They needed a revelation

of His true Kingship. They had entirely sympathised with that expectation of an earthly monarchy which had led to the attempt of the Galileans to make Him king. Their eyes needed to be opened to the real nature of that Kingship which inherently belonged to Jesus. Their old hopes of earthly sovereignty must give way to a glad acceptance of the spiritual claims of the Master. They needed also a reassuring revelation of the power of Jesus. The opposition of the Pharisees had become more envenomed and dangerous. There were elements of discord and conflict which might readily be used to provoke a bitter and violent struggle. The disciples were bewildered at the growing animosity of the religious leaders of the nation. Jesus saw that they needed such confirmation and comfort as the vision of His glory would give, before He could lead them further into the bitterness and dismay of fresh conflict at Jerusalem. In view also of the issues of the coming struggle the disciples needed a new standpoint from which to look at the death upon the Cross. Their attitude towards His anticipations of suffering and death was one of ignorance and instinctive aversion. Death and resurrection alike seemed impossible to their minds. Christ would teach them to look at His Death as something different from death as it had hitherto been known. He would lead them to grasp something of the glory of that Divine Personality, which had taken to Himself our human nature, while at the same time He confirmed to them with fresh authority His purpose of death. He was to "accomplish" a "decease" at Jerusalem. That death would not be the sudden extinction of all His hopes. It was the purposed path of glory. It was victory, not

defeat. To this end Jesus drew aside for a moment the veil of humiliation, and disclosed to His disciples a vision of the divine glory shining through the finite weakness of His perfect humanity.

The three disciples had soon fallen asleep upon the mount. It must have been no new experience for them to accompany Jesus at the end of the day to some place of solitude, where He would pray, while they slept. They had almost slept till the vision was passed. They woke to see the figure of Jesus outlined in dazzling splendour, shining with a light of glistening brightness, and in the halo of that glory their straining eyes discerned the figures of Moses and Elijah, the two revered heroes of Israel's faith and expectation. "Now Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep; but when they were fully awake, they saw His glory, and the two men that stood with him." St. Peter's active thoughts at once turned to the practical details of the Feast of Tabernacles. He would have booths built here upon the mount in which Jesus, Moses and Elijah might keep festival. "Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles, one for Thee and one for Moses and one for Elijah, not knowing what he said." But even as he spoke, the representatives of the Old Dispensation were passing away. A bright cloud overshadowed them and veiled the vision from the eyes of the disciples. From the depths of the cloud came the voice of God, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him." In fear they fell upon their faces and dared not look up till Jesus Himself had touched them, and said, "Arise and be not afraid." Then lifting up their eyes, "they saw

no one, save Jesus only." The witnesses had passed. Jesus, with glowing face and radiant mien, waited to lead the wondering disciples down to join their brethren at the foot of the mount.

Doubtless it was primarily to confirm their faith that the disciples were allowed to see the vision of Moses and Elijah. These two Hebrew leaders, so prominent in Rabbinic teaching, represented the whole revelation of the Law and the Prophets. The great difficulty of the disciples had been the reconciling of the Master's hope of suffering and death with the prophetic picture of the Messiah. Here, then, were the two great forerunners of the Anointed, proclaiming their acceptance of a Messiah, who should fulfil God's Will by a death in the Holy City itself. It was a timely revelation, peculiarly appropriate to the mental needs of the disciples. It is true they could not yet apprehend its meaning. They were spiritually unready, and they were not alert at that moment to the voice of Divine revelation. "They held their peace and told no man in those days any of the things which they had seen." The import of it was too profound. They had not yet understood. But the Transfiguration had been a vision of arresting and memorable power; which time would not efface. Its incidents of glory impressed themselves indelibly upon their memories. And afterwards, looking back, as the bewilderment of the Cross passed away, they could recall the significant disclosure of the Deity of Jesus as He moved steadfastly towards the Passion and the Cross. Long afterwards that memory was recalled in the words, "He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved

Son, in Whom I am well pleased; and this voice we ourselves heard come out of heaven, when we were with Him in the holy mount."

Prayer for Faith and Grace.

O God, Who in the glorious Transfiguration of Thy only-begotten didst by the testimony of the Fathers confirm the truth of the mysteries of the Faith; and by the Voice that came from the excellent glory didst wondrously foreshow the perfect adoption of Thy sons, mercifully vouchsafe to make us even now fellow-heirs with Him, Who is the King of Glory, even Jesus Christ our Lord.

C

The Transfiguration carries with it a revelation not only of the Godhead of Christ, but also of some of the mysteries of the life beyond the veil. Moses and Elijah appear as witnesses from Paradise to the work of Jesus. It must have been for them a revelation of peculiar happiness. Each of them in the days of his earthly ministry had lived for God, and in their work of leadership and witness they had both experienced the special nearness of the Divine Presence. Alike they had suffered rebuff and disheartening defeat. They had seen their hopes frustrated, their ideals shattered. The failures of their ministry had crushed their zeal and broken their hearts. To each God had given a special revelation. Moses had stood in the cleft of the rock, covered with the hand of God, and had seen the goodness and the glory of the Lord. Before Elijah on Mount Horeb the Lord had passed by in wind, in earthquake and in fire, and in the still small voice Elijah had recognised the disclosure of the Will of God. But death had found the hopes of each yet unfulfilled. The Land of Promise had not been

entered, the forces of apostasy had not been defeated, when Moses and Elijah laid down their earthly work. And now, after these many years of patient prayer and growing knowledge of God's Will, they were brought to see all their hopes fulfilled in the Person of the great Deliverer and Redeemer of His people, Jesus, God made man. The Messiah's way, like theirs, is a way of conflict and suffering. But in His steadfast obedience they see the certainty of triumph, and in His unconquerable love they read the sure fulfilment of all those promises of glory, in the faith of which they had served their generation. To such faithful heralds of His kingdom the call to be with Jesus on the mount must have been a great reward. Trustfully and gladly did they pass on to Jesus the nation which they had helped to train in the traditions of faith and righteousness. Their leadership is merged in the victorious kingship of Jesus. The tiny glow of their weak radiance is lost in the glory of Him, in Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom. "Hear ye Him" is the message of the Voice from heaven, setting the seal of God to that self-effacement which the saints themselves rejoice to make in the presence of their Lord. "Jesus only" summed up the new revelation for which they had so surely prepared the way. It must have been an honour and a joy to them, that at this supreme moment of His life they could bear witness before His disciples to the great sacrifice of their incarnate Lord.

The appearance of Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration bears witness also to the reality of that communion of interest, which binds the souls in the unseen world to their brethren upon earth. It is an inspiration to know that while the purpose of God

unfolds itself in the life on earth, we are not alone in our struggles, we are not unaided in our prayers, nor without sympathy in our ideals of fellowship and holiness. We, like the disciples, may see dimly the way of God's deliverance, we may cling still to unworthy hopes of earthly power, and may lack that courageous faith which throws itself gloriously upon the promises of the Incarnate. But already we are called to higher hopes and clearer vision by the unseen life and prayers of those who in Paradise share with us the fellowship of Jesus. How many of them have passed to their rest with their work unfinished, with the sense of failure and defeat upon their souls. The greater their hope, the greater their disappointment. They grieved for the failure of their Master's cause. It was for His sake that their hearts were broken. Their faithful warnings were derided. The beauty of their lives passed unobserved. They looked, but saw no glimmering of the dawn. But now may we not think and trust that already they have begun to see their dearest hopes fulfilled, as Jesus unfolds His growing purpose to the world? Must not many a teacher and leader of men have learned in that world beyond to find in Jesus Christ Himself the unexpected fulfilment of all their hopes, the satisfaction of all their unexpressed desires, the completion of all that was unfinished in their work? May we not feel that their deepest desire to-day is to entrust those they most dearly love to the guidance of Jesus, and bind those over whom they yet have influence to the discipleship of the Master? May we not anticipate the vision of Paradise? We can learn already to look at the dark problems of life to-day with that insight of faith and

sure expectation of victory which mark the fuller vision of the souls in Paradise. They have advanced in the knowledge of God's Will. They have seen the great purposes of God. They have traced the victory of His love. They are ready to bear witness, if we will, to-day to the glorious issue of the Divine purpose, triumphant through suffering, victorious over death.

A Prayer for the Departed.

O Almighty God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, Who by a voice from heaven didst proclaim, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, multiply, we beseech Thee, to those who rest in Jesus, the manifold blessings of Thy love, that the good work which Thou didst begin in them may be perfected unto the day of Jesus Christ. And of Thy mercy, O Heavenly Father, vouchsafe that we, who now serve Thee here on earth, may at the last, together with them, be found meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, for the sake of the same Thy Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

D

The glory of the Transfiguration shines in the earthly life of Jesus with a light all the more significant because it stands out in brilliant splendour against a dark background of almost unbroken humiliation and shame. The uniqueness of this occasion of glory helps us to realise how strict were the limitations and restraints which Jesus so steadfastly set himself to endure in assuming our human nature. The humiliation so deliberately chosen by Jesus is repeated in the enforced sufferings of our own life to-day. We are ever subject to limitations and restraints, to weaknesses and failures, to a discipline of sorrow and defeat, by which we are being called into fellowship with the sufferings of Jesus. Yet beneath that veil of

weakness lies the glory of God's own indwelling Spirit, revealing Himself, not in repeated visitations of majesty and power, but in the normal and monotonous exercise of our ordinary faculties and activities. Every vision of the Deity of Jesus is a mount of glory for us. It was, as He prayed, that Jesus was transfigured. For us, too, prayer is a mount of transfiguration, in which our own lives are caught up into the glory of Christ Himself. The Holy Eucharist, meeting place as it is of heaven and earth, irradiates our lives with the glory of God and makes them shine with the splendour of another world. When prayer and communion open to us this gate of glory we are ready to say with St. Peter, "It is good for us to be here." And we would make tabernacles to house the heavenly visitants, and prepare to dwell for ever in the spiritual joy of the mount. But vision is not the whole glory of man. Vision is but the handmaid of service. Jesus could not stay upon the mount in the enjoyment of undisturbed communion with the Father. At the foot of the mount lay the world with its sorrows, its sins, its devilries and its suffering, waiting for the touch of His healing Hand, the comfort of His word, the light of His Presence. The way of the Master is the way of the disciple. We, too, are set for service. Our service is inspired by the vision on the mount. The glory of the mount still glowed upon the face of Jesus, as He drew near to the sordid scene of human suffering at the foot of the hill. The writhing demoniac, the bewildered father, the astonished multitude, the baffled disciples, looked alike with wonder at the marks of Transfiguration yet lingering upon His face as He came to them with the living ministries of heaven. It is ours also each day to go

down from the mount, radiant with the glory of fellowship with God, that we may serve a world bound fast in the toils of Satan. Grace and truth which we seek by daily prayer and frequent communion are not given, that we may selfishly bask in the sunshine of God's Presence and be at peace, but that we may serve Him more freely in those active ministries of help and healing with which we bring the glory of God into the lives of men. If God gives us the vision of His glory, it is that we, transfigured by His Presence, and bearing in our lives the impress of the beauty of His holiness, may bring strength and gladness into the lives of those who have not yet been called to the glories of the mount. Vision will quicken service. And service will renew in us the will and capacity for vision and send us back to the mount humbled and expectant to wait once more upon the glory of God. Good indeed it is to be upon that mount, if it means the bracing of the will, the quickening of faith, the losing of self, while we stay our souls upon that vision, which empowers us to live the transfigured life in a world always filled for us with the glory of God.

A Prayer for Vision.

Grant to us, Eternal God, such a vision of Thy glory, that renewed in loyalty and faith we may spend ourselves freely in Thy service, and may bring light and joy to those who are in distress, for His sake Who is the brightness of Thy glory and the express image of Thy Person, even Jesus Christ our Lord.

X

THE RISEN LORD

St. John xxi. 1–23.

Galilee, which had seen the earliest days of Christ's ministry, had also a special place in the counsels of the risen Lord as the ground of tryst for Himself and His disciples in the great Forty Days. Jerusalem had its tragic memories of suffering and strife. It was pre-eminently the city of rejection. It had witnessed the disciples' failure and the Master's death. The very scene of defeat and death had become indeed the scene of Easter victory. The sadness of death at Calvary had given way to the joy of the risen life in the garden of Joseph. The doubts and fears of the Upper Room had been dispelled by the visit of the Risen Lord. There in that very room, in anticipation of the Pentecostal gift, Jesus had given significant warning of the new life of apostleship that lay before His disciples. "Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you. As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you. And when He had said this He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained." To understand such a commission, to realise the call of apostleship, to adjust their lives to

this new work of witness and hope, was not the work of a moment. It was not a mission which could be self-taught. It needed the spell of the Master's presence, the guidance of His teaching, the authority of His word, if the lives of the disciples were to be recreated to carry on the Saviour's work and to establish His Kingdom. For such days of instruction and fellowship Jerusalem was in no way suited. Its streets were too crowded, its life was too busy, its atmosphere too laden with rancour and bigotry. The danger of arrest was too great. The city offered neither peace nor safety.

It was to Galilee, therefore, that the first words of the risen Saviour called His disciples. "Go, tell My brethren that they go into Galilee and there they shall see Me." It was some scene in Galilee which St. Paul recalled when he wrote, "Then He appeared to above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain until now, but some are fallen asleep." It was of events in Galilee chiefly that the historian was thinking when he said, "He showed Himself alive after His Passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God." Galilee made an irresistible appeal to the disciples in their hour of trial. It was a welcome relief for them to go back to their native air and to find relaxation from strain and fatigue in the familiar scenes of the Galilean lake. "I go a-fishing," said St. Peter. "We also go with thee," was the ready response of his brethren. Thus Jesus made provision for those who were to be fishers of men. For the last stages of their training He brought them back to those scenes in which their first eager

enthusiasm had found birth. As they retraced the very steps of their first discipleship and recalled the words and acts of Christ's earliest ministry, their hearts began to open at last to the true meaning of those Galilean Days when the Kingdom of God was preached and they rallied to its call.

A

Patience is the first and the last lesson of the fisherman. Simon Peter could recall many a time when he had toiled all the night and taken nothing. But of all those times of disappointment one stood out most clearly in his memory, when in the morning Jesus had come and had bidden him launch out again into the deep. He had obeyed. And with the wonderful haul of fishes, which strained the nets to breaking, had come the call of the Master to forsake all and follow Him. Now on his return to the little fishing fleet the very first night's experience had proved another disappointment. "They went forth and entered into a ship immediately, and that night they caught nothing." The morning broke and they were turning homeward when a voice called to them from the shore, "Children, have ye aught to eat?" The disappointment evident in their reply was checked by the command, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat and ye shall find." At once they found a great shoal of fish about them, and with straining nets they turned for the shore. Simon Peter's active energy was engaged fully in the new duties of the moment, but the thoughts of St. John ran upon the figure of Him Who stood waiting still upon the shore. Memory recalled the wonderful draught

of fishes with which Jesus had marked the moment of His call. Love came to the aid of memory, and faith confirmed the promptings of love. "It is the Lord," he cried, and with the cry Simon Peter cast himself, as he was, into the sea and struggled to the feet of the Master. What was all the fishing in the world to him now that Jesus Himself was there? His old ardour flamed afresh. He would renew his loyalty. Never again would he be wanting when the Master called. Thus St. Peter spent those first moments alone with Jesus, abashed in penitence, aglow with hope, while the others brought the fish to land. Who can say with what gladness Jesus welcomed the coming of His impetuous disciple? Simon Peter stood surprised before the fire which Jesus had made and the food which He had prepared. The old order was indeed changed. It was the Master now Who was serving His disciples in the simple preparation of the meal. But the old spirit of fellowship and co-operation stood unchanged. Jesus would have the disciples bring of the fish which they had caught. So in the hush of the morning, in awed wonder and growing hope, the disciples partook of the bread and broiled fish which Jesus had made ready. It was the welcome with which Jesus called the disciples back to the lessons of their ministry and the meaning of their mission.

Each detail had its significant suggestion to the minds of the awakened disciples. If, in the miracle of three years ago they had been called to be fishers of men by One Who had since trodden the path of disappointment, suffering and death, that call was now renewed in identical terms by One Who had proved Himself the Lord of life. If in "the days of His

flesh" they had needed patience and the crowning grace of steadfast endurance, they would need patience and endurance still in the days of His glory. For it was through their human agency that God would cast the net of the Gospel in the wide waters of the world. There was no security from human error and self-will. There was no promise of immediate and unbroken success. Disappointments there would always be. Often would the fishers toil all the night and take nothing. But after these dark nights when the morning broke Jesus would stand on the shore, with words of guidance and hope. Always there would be the morning vision of the triumphant Lord. Always there would be the Presence, to renew discipleship, to inspire success, to awaken service.

These are the conditions of every form of service in which man co-operates with God. More especially are these the marks of ministerial service in the Kingdom of His grace. Those whom Christ calls to His side to share His ministerial work, to be His witnesses, to dispense the treasures of His Word and Sacraments, are called to a ministry of heroic patience. The endurance which God asks of His workers is the gift of God Himself. It is His own patience, the patience with which the Divine Love carries out the steadfast will of God amid the disappointments and failures of human disobedience. Men fail but God does not despair. The Divine Will is thwarted, but the serene calm of God is not disturbed. There is no pain, no passion, no revenge, only the quiet adjustment of the ways of divine holiness to the new issues which human sin has raised. There is no sense of effort, crisis or defeat, but the love of God works on with hope untiring and

unquenchable. The Divine Shepherd seeks "until He find." Nothing is lost that eternal patience can reclaim. To us that gift of divine patience comes through the grace of the Holy Spirit. It is a definite mark of that endowment of ghostly strength, that fruit of long-suffering, which the Holy Ghost bestows. It is His work, as the Spirit of grace, to enable us to become godlike, to make it possible for us to reflect in our lives, however faintly, some of the attributes of God. Each separate element of the perfect character is, in its degree, something that only an indwelling God could achieve in the human soul.

As the character thus grows, it is into the very image of Christ Himself that we are being changed from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Son. Only God can produce such fruit in our lives. We fail in patience, because we regard it as a natural endowment instead of a spiritual achievement. We learn patience from God, as we watch His dealings with our own souls. As we view our own slow progress, our repeated falls, our persistent rebellion, we realise how wonderfully hopeful must be God's view of our life, that He deals so patiently with us. He must see some worthy, glorious end, to which all tends, bearing with us so gently and so tenderly, because He sees the beauty that one day shall be. That is the first lesson in patience, patience with ourselves in the power of the Spirit, suffering ourselves gladly because we ourselves are wise. So God teaches us the secret of patience with others. Patience is the fruit of faith and love—faith in the triumph of the divine gentleness, love which enters into the divine view of other lives and holds fast through all human weakness and betrayal.

Most of the greater problems in the life of the Church to-day have been precipitated by human impatience. The first breaches of the unity of the Church were the fruit of impatience. With each fresh crisis impatience has broken out anew and prompted fresh withdrawals, till the divisions among Christians, even in such tolerant days as these, are found intolerable. Men are so seized of the evils of disunion that they are ready lightly to imperil principles of Catholic order, if only they can gain an immediate and specious appearance of Christian unity. But diseases bred of impatience will not be healed by methods of haste. Patience only can prepare the way of reunion, the patience of penitence and faith and love. In the long delay of our eager hope penitence will see the punishment for that imperfect witness, that waning zeal for righteousness, that indifferent love of souls, by which the Church itself has contributed to the guilt of dissent. Faith will hold fast with unwavering trust to those first principles of order, which, under divine sanction from the days of the apostles, have safeguarded the ministry of grace and preserved the unity of the Body of Christ. Love, while it recognises that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost, and welcomes the fruit of the Spirit's working wherever there is holiness of life, will not surrender truth to sentiment, nor principle to emotion, nor despise that discipline which is the very salt of love. Where God is patient, man has no need to be reckless. Patience means trust in God and sure reliance upon His ways. Impatience means a hasty resort to impulsive human ways, which take the place of those patient methods of sustained spiritual effort, by which alone the city of God is built.

The earnest priest, the eager worker for God, knows no greater trial than the indifference with which his message is received, the thanklessness with which his work is greeted, the slowness with which prejudice and ignorance are overcome. They toil all the night. They take nothing. Yet that is not the meagre result by which their ministry is measured. Success it is not ours to command. Obedience, patience, goodwill are all that God asks of us. Success is His to give or to withhold. There are times when He may guide us to the miraculous draught. But that may only be if we wait upon His Will and cast the net at His command. We take upon ourselves the weight of responsibilities that are not ours. It is ours to bear witness. It is God's to convert. It is ours to cast the net. It is God's to fill it. No less in our devotional life than in our life of ministry we burden our hearts with duties that are not ours. It is ours patiently to tread the way of daily praise, of daily prayer, of sacramental fellowship, of unselfish service. It is God's to grant what response He wills to our imperfect discipleship. No crisis, no failure, no desolation, no darkness must drive us from the path of daily patience. One day, we know, Jesus Himself will stand on the eternal shore and bid us bring of the fish which we have caught, that we may taste the heavenly rapture of the triumphant Lover of Souls.

A Prayer for Patience.

Blessed Lord, whose long-suffering is our salvation, Who hast bidden us in patience possess our souls, grant that without haste and without sloth we may work faithfully for the coming of Thy Kingdom, and by patient continuance in well-doing may commend Thy Will to all men, in the strength of the Holy Spirit, Who with Thee and the Father Almighty liveth and reigneth, ever One God, Holy and Eternal.

B

The fellowship of the early meal with the risen Lord by the lakeside was followed by the commission of Simon Peter, which called him once more into the active service of the Master. In the teaching of the great Forty Days Jesus was eager to impress upon His disciples that the victory of the Resurrection was not the crown of His divine work, but the beginning of a new stage in the establishment of the Kingdom of God, a stage in which they would find increasing scope for all their powers of loyalty and service. There was no sign that either their desertion or His own death had frustrated or changed His plans. Under His guidance they looked back and saw that all the events of the Galilean Days, His public teaching, His private instructions, His acceptance of failure, His promise of victory, had been the ordered prelude to new and greater activities of God, in which they were being called to share. They began to understand, what experience afterwards so fully confirmed, that the wonders of the three years' ministry would be far surpassed by the wonders of the risen and ascended life of Jesus. They realised that, if at the first preaching of the Kingdom they had been called to special nearness to the Master, they would have a position of even greater privilege and trust in the founding and establishing of the Kingdom. The high hopes of great adventure with which they had entered upon their discipleship would not be belied. The reality of their great renunciation, the devotion of all their powers of service, would be proved to the utmost in the life which the great Forty Days foreshadowed.

The nature of this new task was significantly shown by the solemn commission given to St. Peter, when the morning meal was ended. Simon Peter had never lost his capacity for leadership. It was he who had rallied the disciples and brought them back to Galilee. His denial of Jesus in the courtyard of Caiaphas had not robbed him of the confidence of his brethren. They felt that they had played the hero's part no better than he. But how would he stand now in the eyes of the risen Master? Already on the day of the Resurrection Jesus had found Simon. The penitent disciple must have disclosed to his brethren the welcome of loving pardon with which he had been received. They, too, in turn had been met by Jesus with signal generosity and affection. Their confidence and self-respect had been restored. They had begun to find themselves again. Now as the disciples began to be reconstituted for the work of the apostolate, Jesus wished by a definite representative act of commission to confirm St. Peter in his leadership, and to proclaim the character and conditions of that pastoral work to which they were now called.

"Simon, Son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?" With chastened humility the eager apostle made reply to the question thrice repeated. He would not lay claim to that devoted love of absolute self-surrender, which Jesus asked. But he could be honest in assuring Jesus of his loyal friendship and true human affection. And that Jesus was ready to accept. Upon such a frank foundation of human love, honest, humble, steadfast, Jesus could build a true apostolate. "Feed My lambs." "Tend My sheep." "Feed My sheep." In such simple words Jesus designated Simon Peter

trustfully to that work of crowning difficulty and danger, in which he should seal his loyalty with the glory of a martyr's death. "When thou wast young, thou guidedst thyself and walkedst whither thou wouldest. But when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands and another shall gird thee and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. Now this He spake, signifying by what manner of death he should glorify God." Such was the path of love.

It is significant that almost the last words of the risen Lord should reveal the new power of redeemed love in human life. Christ set an entirely new value upon human love. No one had ever been able to trust it as He did. Everyone had experience of love. Men sang of its beauty, rejoiced in its energy, thrilled under its passion. But they could not trust it. It had proved too capricious, too illogical, too transient and uncertain, to be the sure foundation for any system of morality or religion. So the wise had passed it by—not because they did not know its power, but because its very vehemence and might seemed to place it beyond the reach of discipline or control. Those who knew man's heart only with the imperfect insight of human experience had found love too wayward, too wanton, too selfish to be the mirror or revelation of God. But He, Who is the Searcher of all hearts, the Creator of the souls of men, Who knew what was in man—He has made love the foundation of all religious life and service. Upon love, He said, had been based all the discipline of the Law, all the hope and promise of the Prophets. Love is the starting point, love is the guide, love is the goal of life. Christ has so remade and transfigured human love that it has become a new

thing. The old commandment sounded new as it came from the lips of incarnate Love, "a new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." In the words "as I have loved you" lies the new secret of human love. Such love is the happiness, the strength, the perfection of man. It is just the human love of St. Peter that Jesus takes, the love that binds friend to friend. Earth, with all its human loves, becomes the school of Divine love. Love for one another leads out to the love of God. God's thoughts are not our thoughts. Our love has greater worth than we imagined. Recreated by Christ, it becomes no fleeting emotion, too fickle to trust, no overwhelming passion, too violent to control, but the ordered channel of divine revelation, the safeguard of holy discipline, the inspiration of service, the guide to eternal life.

The apostles were quick to learn the Master's lesson and to set love in the foreground of the Christian life. Of all the great virtues and excellences of human life St. Paul declared love to be the greatest. With St. John love was literally the last word of apostolic teaching in the closing years of the first century. "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us." True love is not the capricious, uncontrollable passion that men had fancied it to be. It is an ordered, disciplined emotion, the gift of the Spirit, Who is the spirit of order. We can learn love. The school of love in which we are trained to love God truly is just the sphere of our human relations, the love of friend for friend, of parent for child, of husband for wife, of priest for people. It is out of love

for one another that love of God emerges. Men shrink from the truth of this, though no words can be more emphatic than the personal witness of St. John, "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us." "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God, Whom he hath not seen?" The capacity to love one another is our capacity also to love God. In loving whatsoever things are lovely in this life among our fellow-men, we are developing the very faculties which lead out in the end to our loving God. That was why Jesus was content to accept the love which St. Peter offered, the love which linked men together in affection, which was all he dared to claim. Jesus knew that out of that love purified, enriched, deepened, would spring that higher love which binds the soul to God, which reaches beyond liking and affection to adoration and worship. If men would seek a greater love of God, they must first sound the depths of true and pure human affection. Love, if it be true, must lead out beyond all that is finite to the supreme and infinite Love. Every new progress in our love for one another is a fresh step taken in that pilgrimage of love, which ends in the happiness of perfect love in heaven. Love is of God. It begins with Him. He gave it. He reveals it, showing us its beauty in the familiar relations of earthly life. He transfigures it, touching our human affections with the glory of the eternal. Love ends in God. It partakes of His infinity and is restless even till it find eternal rest in Him.

It was this love which Jesus recognised as the first condition of Simon Peter's fitness for the service of God. If we are to work for God, we must be sure

that we love Him. If we would love God above all things, we must not despise the familiar simplicities of earthly love. We need not fear that we love friends too much. If they seem to hide God from us, it is because we do not love them enough. Is it really love? Love needs to be purged of all that is selfish and unworthy. It must be ever true to our noblest self, feeding on sacrifice, spending itself in sympathy. Then in the things around us, in the stuff that our daily life is made of, in the relations of human affection, we shall find our true training in the higher love of God. So we are fitted for the work of God. Where that love is, no difficulties daunt us in His service, no loss of spiritual comfort can cause distress, no failure can bring dismay. With Catherine of Genoa, we can say, "Not what cometh of Thee do I crave, but Thee Thyself alone, O tender Love." It is God, not His gifts that must satisfy the worker. We must watch ourselves. Work begun for the love of God may be carried on out of love for the work itself. God may cease to be the true motive of the work which was begun in His Name. We need continually to fear lest we lose that first love, so precious in its purity, so strong in the hopefulness of its vision.

We need not fret ourselves with fear, because we cannot yet realise all we hope. We can take upon our lips the words of St. Peter, so conscious of his failure, yet so truthful in the loving insight of Jesus, "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee." God knows, and "loves us better than He knows." He sees the secret beginnings which are hidden from our eyes. He counts victory that which we have called defeat. He sees faith where we feel

only doubt. Love can trust the tenderness of God, as He looks upon the struggling efforts of His workers. He accepts our good purpose and honours our goodwill, and out of weakness makes us strong by the very trust with which He lays each fresh charge upon us.

And the charge which love accepts is the charge of those whom Jesus calls "*My* lambs," "*My* sheep." They are His. That gives them their dignity in our eyes. That makes the care of them a divine service. We regard them with reverence. They are dear to Him. He has purchased them with His own precious Blood. He counts them His. In serving them we serve Jesus Himself. In coming to them, we come where Jesus has been before us. We cannot despise those whom Jesus honours. We cannot be rough where Jesus is gentle. We dare not be hasty where Jesus is so patient. We cannot despair where Jesus is so hopeful. "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these My brethren, even these least, ye did it unto Me." It was so that St. Peter received his great commission from the risen Lord. It is from the same Lord, calling us to prove our love in His service, seeing in us that love for Him which yet has hardly dawned, trusting to us the care of His own "beautiful flock," that every worker for God in every sphere of unselfish service receives to-day the same charge, "Feed My sheep."

A Prayer for Love in the Service of God.

O God, Who makest us to will and to do after Thy good pleasure, grant us such faithfulness in love that we may be steadfast in Thy service and may lead many to find rest in Thee through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C

The Galilean Days of our Lord's Ministry have drawn to their appointed end. Their meaning can only be understood in relation to that whole work of divine redemption, to which they formed a prelude. It is well, therefore, before we close their story, to look at that great purpose of God, and realise what those first principles of the Kingdom of Christ are which during those Galilean years were hidden from the eyes of the disciples themselves. It is of infinite importance for us that we should understand how the labour which Christ spent on those disciples was not lost, but has availed for our own salvation. It is of vital interest for us to realise what it means for us to-day that those fishers of men became ministers of grace. It is reasonable to see in this last miracle of the Resurrection a prophecy of the triumph of the Church of the risen Lord. It stands as a pledge of the victory of God achieved in human life through human means. Man is made co-operator with God in gathering the harvest of redemption, partner with God in the work of Grace.

Grace is the life of God in man. By the very terms of creation man needed grace for the fullness of life. The glory of man is that he was made for communion with God. Man was not at first complete, he was not made perfect. He was not yet matured in experience, in knowledge, or in character. But he was good. With all the powers that he possessed he held fast by God. His first efforts of conscious will, reason and affection were in harmony with the Will of God. He was capable of development along the lines of more complete and more fruitful fellowship with God. From the

first and for all time man was made dependent upon God. God alone "hath life in Himself." Man was not made self-sufficient. Continuously, essentially he must depend upon God. At every step he needed the divine help to be fully man. We can descry the divine purpose. Growth was to be secured and brought to perfection by union with the incarnate God. The Incarnation, with all that it involved of lowliness and self-limitation on the part of Christ, was the eternal purpose of God. And by the Incarnation God purposed two things for man—the revelation of Himself and the uplifting of our human nature.

The Incarnation was to reveal God. That revelation was to be completed and made sure by the gift of the Spirit. Man's fellowship with God should be communion with One Whom he came increasingly to know in the truth of His Deity. The entrance of God Himself upon human life would complete that knowledge. God by becoming man would provide a way of mediation, in the strength of which mankind would find full access to God. That glorious and sacred humanity would be imparted to each individual soul through the grace of the Holy Spirit, Who should be the Spirit of the Incarnate. We can conceive how glorious it would have been for the sinless God-Man to have been welcomed by a sinless mankind, not yet matured in all the full powers of perfect manhood, but responsive at all points to the touch and inspiration of God, a mankind that would have understood the sublime beauty of the Incarnation, would have adored its lowliness and reverenced its majesty. The Incarnate Life would have been the blossoming of human nature into its full and perfect flower. So the human race

blessed and sanctified by this new advent of the life of God, would have been raised to its purposed greatness.

But this was not what befell. There came a moment when evil, presented from without, proved the undoing of man's obedience. He swerved aside from the direct path of progress and development. He fell away from fellowship. His advance was retarded. The vision of God was obscured. His very desire for communion for God became hesitating. The light upon his path grew dim. His life was in helpless disarray. His will was weakened, his affections distorted, his mind distracted from the vision of goodness and truth. Yet, for all this, the purpose of God held on unchanged. The nature of man needed now not only perfection but redemption. A way for the gift of grace must yet be found. Now that it meant entrance upon a life marred with sin, it would mean a life of suffering and a death of shame. Yet Jesus became incarnate and was made man, conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary. The sacred Humanity which thus He bore was to be the means of grace for man.

To make that sacred Humanity available for the redemption and restoration of mankind was the issue of His life and death, the fruit of His Resurrection and Ascension. In that Humanity He passed through all the experiences of real human life. The record of the Galilean Days is a witness to the fullness and reality of that human experience. All the emotions and affections proper to true manhood, all the impulses and sufferings of sinless human nature, in body, soul and spirit, were His. Thus bearing our nature Jesus died upon the Cross and carried it victoriously through the grave. The Resurrection and the Ascension

were stages in the final glorifying of that sacred Humanity, which, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, was now made available for man as the source of grace and life.

It was to this that the Galilean Days were a prelude. The appearance of the risen Lord to the disciples by the lakeside with the commission for a new apostleship sets the three years' ministry of Jesus in its true light. It is not the years that have gone before, but the long years that came after that witness the greatest wonders. It is the life after the Resurrection, the life of glory, that is the life of greatest efficiency and sublimest power. The three years of visible ministry made the earthly preparation for what was to follow. Jesus needed to create upon earth a sphere in which His sacred Humanity could act. That was the meaning of the patient labour which He had spent upon His disciples and of the ministry of the great Forty Days which were now drawing to its close. Into this organism, which Jesus had created, the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost infused the breath of life, pouring upon the apostles assembled in the Upper Room, the first gift of grace from the sacred Humanity of their Ascended Lord.

That gift of grace, thus carefully prepared, thus effectively bestowed, was to be jealously guarded in the body of Christ's Church. While the Holy Spirit was the invisible agent of the unseen and ascended Lord, the visible agents of Christ in the visible body of His Church were to be the apostles and those whom they should call and commission to the definite ministry of grace. The Kingdom of Christ at length established upon earth was the heaven-blest sphere of Divine

grace. In that fellowship and society Jesus Himself through all the ages would present Himself for the uplifting of mankind, imparting the grace of His risen and ascended life, through outward sacraments of His own ordinance, of which He constituted His apostles the first ministers and guardians. It is to this ministry of grace that the incidents of the Galilean draught of fishes significantly point.

Human agents imply sacramental means. It is not difficult to divine why Jesus chose such outward and plainly visible means for the bestowal of grace. An outward sacrament makes the manner and the moment of the gift both definite and certain. Men are freed from the uncertainties of fleeting emotion and the vagueness of transient moods of feeling. A sure and certain pledge of God's access is securely given. The soul need not torture itself with doubts and fears. And the social side of these outward sacraments had a natural appropriateness in the religion of that new fellowship, wherein men who had once been sundered and separated by sin were now being knit together in a vital brotherhood of love. Moreover, the sacraments, with their outward and inward parts, touched man in his fullness. They touched both body and soul. They did not deal with man as all spirit, or all body, but they recognised the duality of his nature, sanctifying and strengthening him in the fullness of his powers. The outward element emphasised the fact that the Divine sacraments are not magic, but are moral means of salvation. Man has his own part to play, his own obedience to make, his own definite act of co-operation to supply. He is marked out as a co-operator with God, who must contribute his own

disciplined act of faith and obedience, before God can bless and sanctify his soul. Thus the sacraments of grace in the Church are the hallowed instruments of the risen life of Jesus.

This, then, is the Galilee to which Jesus leads us to-day. Here we may make full proof of our discipleship and become His apostles. Here in the Church of the risen Lord we have the certainty of Divine grace. Here we walk and talk with Jesus. Here He lays upon us the spell of His Presence. Here He calls us to His side. It is He indeed Who baptises, confirms, absolves, blesses, consecrates and sanctifies. Angelic eyes see Him at the altar, "giving Himself with His own Hands," where we can see but the form of His minister. There is no doubt, no hesitation here. In other ways, in other places men may thank God for the overflowing abundance of His uncovenanted mercies, and praise Him for manifest blessings bestowed through other ministries. But here in His Church is the sure and chartered sphere of Divine grace. It must be ours at all hazards to cherish the ordered ministry of the sacraments of His grace, as God has given them. This is to us the surest fruit of these Galilean Days. We cannot live merely on the treasured story of this life of purest innocence and spiritual beauty. It was not for this that the record of these days was given. They give to us the picture of One, "Him the Holy, Him the Strong," Who is not left in Galilee, but Who is with us to-day in His own sacraments of grace. It must be ours, as the fruit of all meditation upon the Gospel story, to grow in the love of the sacraments of Jesus, to deepen our faith in them, to quicken our zeal for them, and so faithfully

and so diligently to persevere in the use of them, as the very gift of Christ Himself, that our lives may ever be "ruled and gladdened by His Presence and wholly wrought into His Image."

An Act of Praise to the Blessed Trinity.

Almighty God, Eternal Father, Who hast made us for Thyself and created us in Thy image, Who sittest above the waterfloods and remainest King for ever, Who daily pourest Thy benefits upon us and givest us all things richly to enjoy, we praise and bless Thy Holy Name.

Most merciful Saviour, Jesus our incarnate Lord, the faithful Witness, the first begotten of the dead, Prince of the kings of the earth, Who hast loved us and washed us from our sins in Thine own Blood and hast made us kings and priests unto God, we praise and bless Thy Holy Name.

Holy and Blessed Spirit, Giver of Life eternal, Fount of Holiness and Truth, Who searchest for us the deep things of God, Who showest to us the things of Jesus, by Whom the whole body of the Church is governed and sanctified, by Whose consecrating power the gifts of grace are assured to us on earth, by Whose Divine consolation the hearts of the sorrowing are comforted, by Whose inspiration the hearts of men are kindled to holiness and the hope of heaven, praise be to Thee for all Thy glory and Thy power.

THE END

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